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THE RESURRECTION
AND
THE VIRGIN BIRTH

TWO ESSAYS

THE RESURRECTION AND OTHER GOSPEL NARRATIVES

AND

THE NARRATIVES OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH

TWO ESSAYS

BY

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PREFACE

It is generally admitted that in the accounts of the first Easter morning recorded in the gospels there are various discrepancies and even contradictions. The purpose of the first of these essays is to suggest a fresh solution of the problem, and frankly abandoning the commonly accepted Mark-Q hypothesis, which indeed seems to create unnecessary difficulties, to show how, if Luke be taken as giving the most primitive form of the evangelical tradition which has survived, we have an explanation of the development of the story which is both reasonable and adequate. Comparison of the different narratives suggests indeed that in many ways the fourth gospel in spite of its later date and more obvious interpretative elements is more reliable historically than Mark. The writer makes no claim to any special literary capacity, or even indeed to a quite ordinary facility in the art of writing—most of his time is spent in quite different pursuits—and he puts forward the two essays only because in spite of their crudeness

and inadequacy he has been told that they may be of value to those interested in, or who have difficulties about, the Resurrection and Virgin Birth. In a discussion on a very different topic with the late Dr. Wickham Legg that great scholar was insistent upon the desirability of those whose researches had led them to definite results publishing them at the earliest opportunity, and for this reason by the kindness of the editors of the *Church Quarterly Review* the writer has printed his conclusions with regard to 'The Eucharistic Prayer' and 'The Origin of the Gospels,' though with the merest suggestion of proof. The first of the two essays in this book is a continuation and application of the principles of the latter, and like it is based on a paper prepared for the Winchester Clerical Association. The Mark-Q hypothesis is to-day regarded as almost axiomatic in any study of the gospels, and the writer is well aware of his audacity in suggesting that what has been called 'the great literary achievement of the last fifty years of New Testament scholarship' is really only a mare's nest, yet the more he examines the question by the help of whatever books are published, the more he is convinced that this is correct. The ease

with which so many put on one side the difficulties of the Mark-Q hypothesis, particularly the many points of agreement of Luke and Matthew against Mark, raises a doubt in many cases whether the writers have ever studied the problem at first hand and apart from reliance on the all too convenient, though by no means exhaustive, lists compiled by Dr. Abbott and Sir John Hawkins. That the writer's conclusions will be generally accepted at once is not expected, but it is hoped that, in spite of many deficiencies of style and method, the argument will be found not unworthy of the attention of some even of those who have made a speciality of Gospel studies, as well as of others who can make no such claim. The original purpose of the writer was not apologetic, but simply to follow a line of argument whithersoever it led. On some points he has to confess that he would not have been sorry if the conclusions had been different, as for example, with regard to the stone at the door of the sepulchre; but if his contentions are correct, it will be seen that there is more to be said for the traditional view than we are frequently allowed to suppose.

It is hoped that the examination of the

accounts of the various ecstatic visions recorded in the New Testament and elsewhere will be of value in explaining the apparent contradiction between Mark and the other synoptic gospels with regard to the conduct of the women at the sepulchre and their report to the apostles, as well as in enabling us to gain a better grasp of the significance of other events in the gospel story.

The second essay seeks to prove that the earliest evangelical tradition included a statement of the fact of the Virgin Birth, and that the verses frequently impugned as interpolated are an original element of the third gospel. The comparison with other accounts of ecstasies it is hoped will be of some value for a proper appreciation of the story of this mystery also.

The text of the many quotations from the gospels and elsewhere is usually that of the Revised Version, and the writer wishes to express his thanks to the University Presses of Oxford and Cambridge for permission to use it. Sometimes, however, for purposes of the argument another translation was necessary, and the writer alone is responsible for all such deviations from the Revised Version, as for any other lapses from strict accuracy of quotation.

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THE RESURRECTION
AND
OTHER GOSPEL NARRATIVES

Victimae Paschali
Laudes immolent Christiani.
Agnus redemit oves ;
Christus innocens Patri
Reconciliavit
Peccatores.
Mors et vita duello
Conflixere mirando ;
Dux vitae mortuus
Regnat vivus.
Dic nobis, Maria,
Quid vidisti in via ?
Sepulchrum Christi viventis,
Et gloriam vidi resurgentis ;
Angelicos testes,
Sudarium et vestes.
Surrexit Christus, spes mea,
Praecedit suos in Galilea.
Credendum est magis soli
Mariae veraci
Quam Judaeorum turbae fallaci.
Scimus Christum resurrexisse
Ex mortuis vere.
Tu nobis, victor rex, miserere.

CHAPTER I

THE SECONDARY CHARACTER OF ST. MARK

SOME time ago the writer published an essay on the 'Origin of the Gospels,'[1] and put forward reasons for thinking that not Mark but Luke represents the earliest evangelical tradition which has survived, Mark, though in some degree exhibiting the teaching of Peter, being for the most part merely an altered and not infrequently an inaccurate version of what we find in Luke, while Matthew, which is even more strongly Petrine, is largely a combination of the traditions found in Mark and Luke, the changes in each case being due, at any rate frequently, to oral transmission, not to the deliberate revision of an editor. It is hoped that it will be not without value to apply the methods enunciated on the former occasion to the stories of the resurrection,

[1] *Church Quarterly Review*, July, 1922.

and an attempt will be made not only to illustrate the priority of Luke, but also to bring out what exactly was the course of events on the first Easter morning, and at the same time show how the different accounts came to be what they are, and to differ in so many particulars.

It will be useful first of all to draw attention to the points of agreement of Luke and Matthew against Mark, in the accounts of the events from Good Friday evening to the morning of the first Easter Day, beginning with the story of the women at the cross. Luke and Matthew agree in saying that they followed Jesus 'from Galilee,' while Mark says 'when he was in Galilee.' Neither Luke nor Matthew says anything of the 'many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem,' of whom Mark speaks. Luke and Matthew agree in omitting the reason for Joseph of Arimathæa's appeal to Pilate, 'because it was the Preparation, that is, the day before the sabbath,' though Luke gives a similar note of time later, presumably as a reason for the haste in burial. 'And it was the day of the Preparation, and the sabbath drew on.' Both Luke and Matthew speak of 'a man' named Joseph, though they

use different Greek words, Mark having nothing to correspond. Both Luke and Matthew say he was 'named' Joseph, while Mark introduces him at once as Joseph. Luke and Matthew say 'this man' went to Pilate, Mark giving no pronoun. They agree, too, in using the participle where Mark has the finite verb followed by 'and.' They agree also in using the same form of compound verb, 'went to,' Mark employing a verb with a different prefix, 'went in.' Luke and Matthew have 'to Pilate,' the dative, but Mark 'unto Pilate,' using a preposition. Both Luke and Matthew omit the incident of Pilate marvelling whether Jesus were already dead, his calling for the centurion and his report, narrated by Mark. They both likewise make no mention of Joseph buying a linen cloth. Matthew and Luke speak of taking 'the body,' 'it,' while Mark says 'him.' Luke and Matthew say Joseph 'wrapped' the body, but Mark that he 'wound' him in a linen cloth. Again Matthew, like Luke, says 'it,' but Mark 'him.' Luke says the tomb was one 'where never man had yet lain,' and with this Matthew agrees, though saying only that it was 'new.' Mark says nothing to this effect. Luke says the women beheld 'the

tomb,' and Matthew that they sat over against 'the sepulchre,' Mark making no mention of the grave at this point. Luke says the women 'returned,' and Matthew that Joseph 'departed,' from the sepulchre, Mark having nothing to correspond. Luke and Matthew begin the account of the women's visit to the sepulchre with one conjunction, 'but,' Mark with another, 'and.' Luke and Matthew both say the women 'came' (aorist) to the tomb; Mark has the historic present, 'come.' Luke and Matthew both use a remarkable verb, properly meaning to dawn, for the approach of another day, in Luke the sabbath, in Matthew the first day of the week (Luke xxiii. 54, Matt. xxviii. 1); Mark, however, avoids it. Luke says the women's visit was 'at early dawn,' and with this Matthew agrees, 'as it began to dawn.' Mark speaks of a later moment, 'when the sun was risen.' Luke and Matthew introduce the angelic vision with the word, 'behold,' but it is not in Mark. Luke says the angels' apparel was 'lightning-like,' and Matthew that the angel's appearance was 'as lightning,' Mark having nothing to correspond. Luke says the women were 'afraid,' and Matthew speaks of the 'fear' of the watchers. Mark merely says the

women were 'amazed.' Luke says the women 'became' afraid, and Matthew that the watchers 'became' as dead men, the verb being absent from Mark. Luke's statement that the women 'bowed down their faces to the earth,' and Matthew's that the watchers 'became as dead men,' seem to be merely different versions of the same thing, as we see in the account of similar visions in Daniel, 'I fell into a deep sleep with my face toward the ground' (viii. 18), 'I retained no strength . . . then was I fallen into a deep sleep on my face, with my face toward the ground' (x. 8–9); Mark has nothing to correspond. Luke and Matthew use the aorist 'said' to introduce the speech of the angels, or angel, but Mark the present, 'he saith.' In Matthew the angel says 'Fear not ye,' which agrees with Luke's statement that the women were 'afraid'; Mark has 'Be not amazed.'[1] In both Luke and Matthew the angels appeal

[1] According to the ordinary text of Luke in the angels' speech we read, 'He is not here, but is risen.' The words are absent, however, from *Codex Bezae* and other authorities, and so may be an early interpolation—a view supported, as we shall see later, by other and more conclusive evidence—so that we cannot include in our list the fact that the order of the words is in agreement with what we find in Matthew, 'He is not here; for he is risen,' and not with Mark, who has 'He is risen; he is not here.'

to our Lord's own words as prophesying His resurrection; in Mark they are recalled as evidence that they would see Him in Galilee. In Luke and Matthew the angels speak of 'the dead,' but not in Mark. Luke says the women 'told all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest,' and Matthew that they ran 'to bring his disciples word,' while Mark says 'they said nothing to any one; for they were afraid.'

In the seventeen verses of Luke which we have examined we notice some thirty-one points on which Luke agrees with Matthew against Mark. It is surely impossible to explain these facts on the hypothesis that Mark is the earliest gospel, and that the other two are derived from it. Allowing to the full the possibility of an early assimilation of the texts of the first and third gospels on the part of the scribes, many of the details of agreement are such that we still find the explanation quite insufficient.

CHAPTER II

THE BURIAL OF OUR LORD

We will now examine in some detail the narratives of the burial and resurrection as given by St. Luke, comparing them with what we find in the other gospels, and tracing out so far as we can the development in the story. Luke, speaking of the events at our Lord's death, says 'And all his acquaintance, and the women that followed with him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things' (xxiii. 49), in which we may trace reminiscences of Psalm xxxviii. 11 and Psalm lxxxviii. 8. Mark says nothing about 'his acquaintance,' but gives the names of some of the women, 'And there were also women beholding from afar: among whom were both Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome; who, when he was in Galilee, followed him, and ministered unto him; and many other women which

came up with him unto Jerusalem' (xv. 40–41). The Marcan account we notice not only gives the information found in the corresponding passage in Luke, but also what we find in two other passages of that gospel. 'He went about through cities and villages . . . and with him the twelve, and certain women . . . Mary that was called Magdalene . . . and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, which ministered unto them of their substance' (viii. 1–3), and 'He went on before, going up to Jerusalem' (xix. 28). Clearly we have a conflation of several passages of Luke, for it would be very unnatural to explain these as derived from the one statement of Mark. The account in Matthew to a large extent reproduces Mark. He notes at the beginning the fact that there were 'many women,' and so discards the clause which speaks of the 'many other women which came up with him unto Jerusalem,' thus agreeing with Luke. He omits the description of James as 'the less,' and instead of Salome mentions 'the mother of the sons of Zebedee,' meaning probably the same person, though not perhaps certainly in view of the many women who were present, and the fact that the third

name in Mark, Salome, is different from that in Luke, Joanna. In John's account, which has points of affinity with Luke's, though referring to an earlier moment, during the actual crucifixion, three women are named, and the third here is the mother of our Lord. 'But there were standing by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene' (xix. 25). 'By the cross' does not necessarily contradict Luke's statement that they stood 'afar off'—it depends on the point of view—but the order of words in the Greek and the fact that we have echoes of the psalter suggest that in Luke the words 'afar off' refer primarily to 'his acquaintance,' and not to the women. That they moved farther away is very improbable.

Luke next proceeds to tell of the good offices of Joseph of Arimathæa. In Mark there is added a note of time, 'And when even was now come,' and similarly in Matthew, but this is impossible if the words have their natural meaning, for with the evening the sabbath began, and no burial rites could be performed. Mark also gives the reason for Joseph's interposition, 'because it was the Preparation, that is, the day before the

sabbath.' John gives the same reason, but explains it at greater length. 'The Jews therefore, because it was the Preparation, that the bodies should not remain on the cross upon the sabbath (for the day of that sabbath was a high day), asked of Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away. . . . And after these things Joseph of Arimathæa . . . asked of Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus' (xix. 31, 38). The law of Deuteronomy required the body of a criminal who had been hanged to be taken down and buried before nightfall. 'And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree; his body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt surely bury him the same day; for he that is hanged is accursed of God; that thou defile not thy land which the Lord thy God giveth thee for an inheritance' (Deut. xxi. 22–3). This rule we notice was carried out in the case of the king of Ai (Josh. viii. 29), and the five kings at Makkedah (Josh. x. 27). A man crucified frequently lived two or three days. 'Blood, it polluteth the land' (Num. xxxv. 33), bringing the curse of God (cf. Gen. iv. 11), so that alive or dead a criminal hanging

on a tree was a defilement. That a body should remain on the cross upon the sabbath would necessarily involve a profanation of the sabbath, a particularly grievous offence when the sabbath was a high day, but if death occurred on the sabbath the condition of things would be still more awkward, for then they must either break the sabbath —and that a high day in the present instance—by burying the body, or else break the law which required the body to be buried before nightfall. There was thus good reason for the anxiety of the Jews that death should occur early enough for the bodies to be buried before the sabbath arrived. Joseph's intervention, according to John, would seem to have been occasioned by his knowledge of that of the Jews, to prevent our Lord's body from being cast into one of the two burial places for criminals. We have thus in John, and the same thing is suggested in Mark, a quite reasonable explanation of an incident which Luke—and likewise Matthew—leaves unexplained.

Mark agrees with Luke in saying that Joseph was a councillor, Matthew omitting the point. Luke says he was 'a good man and a righteous,' which is paraphrased in Mark as 'of honourable estate,' the Greek

word used being one which according to Phrynichus, the grammarian, was in vulgar circles synonymous with wealthy,[1] the description given in Matthew, 'a rich man.' Luke alone adds 'he had not consented to their counsel and deed' (xxiii. 51). According to Mark, if his words are to be taken literally, there was absolute unanimity with regard to our Lord's condemnation. 'The chief priests and the whole council sought witness against Jesus to put him to death' (xiv. 55), 'And they all condemned him to be worthy of death' (xiv. 64), while 'in the morning the chief priests with the elders and scribes, and the whole council, held a consultation, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him up to Pilate' (xv. 1). Matthew's account is substantially the same (xxvi. 59, 66; xxvii. 1, 2). In Luke's narrative the unanimity is limited to those present, and we are not told, as in Mark, that these were 'the whole council.' 'And as soon as it was day, the assembly of the elders of the people was gathered together, both chief priests and scribes; and they led him away into their council . . . And the whole company of them rose up, and

[1] Rutherford, *The New Phrynichus*, § cccix. p. 417; Swete, *St. Mark*, p. 391.

brought him before Pilate (xxii. 66 ; xxiii. 1). In view of the attitude of the rich young ruler (Luke xviii. 18), and Nicodemus (John iii. 1), it is much more probable that there were some who ' had not consented to their counsel and deed ' than that, as Mark says, the whole council was unanimous, though as a matter of fact even Mark seems to contradict this later when he tells us Joseph was a councillor, unless we are to understand that he gave his vote against our Lord, and yet was willing not only to beg for His body, but to prepare it for burial with his own hands. Luke says he ' was looking for the kingdom of God,' a description which reminds us of what he says of Simeon, and of those to whom Anna spake (ii. 25, 38), one which was applicable really to any pious Jew. Mark likewise says he ' was looking for the kingdom of God,' but adds that he ' boldly ' went in unto Pilate. In Matthew there is further development, and he has become ' Jesus' disciple.' Verbally John endorses Matthew's statement, saying that he was ' a disciple of Jesus, but secretly for fear of the Jews,' yet the qualifying clause suggests that in the evangelist's opinion his discipleship was not so very different from that of those of whom he speaks elsewhere,

who said 'He is a good man' yet dare not speak openly of Him 'for fear of the Jews' (vii. 12–13), and so much the same as that of the ruler, who likewise called Jesus 'good' and whom, looking upon him, Jesus loved (Mark x. 17, 21), or the scribe of whom Jesus said 'Thou art not far from the kingdom of God' (Mark xii. 34), words not very different from those used by Luke of Joseph, but scarcely implying that he was 'Jesus' disciple,' to use Matthew's phrase, except in the very broadest sense. So far as Pilate was concerned it would require no very great boldness on the part of a councillor, or indeed of anybody who could put forward a reasonable claim, to go in and beg the body of Jesus, for the Roman government had no quarrel with the dead, but it meant an open confession of discipleship before the Jews on the part of one who had approved His teaching in secret, being afraid to take any such step before. John's words explain a point which Mark leaves rather ambiguous, and the other evangelists ignore.

Luke says nothing about Pilate's attitude to Joseph's request. Mark says, 'And Pilate marvelled if he were already dead: and calling unto him the centurion, he asked him whether he had been any while dead. And

when he learned it of the centurion, he granted the corpse to Joseph' (xv. 44–45). As crucified persons usually lingered several days the incident is very probable, and agrees with John's explanation of the reason for Joseph's intervention, and with his statement that when they came to break the legs of Jesus they found that He was dead already. Mark alone at this point informs us that Joseph 'bought a linen cloth,' which would have been impossible if it had been literally true that 'even was now come' when he went to Pilate. Matthew's addition of the adjective 'clean' is perhaps a modification of the same tradition. Luke continues 'And he took it down, and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid him in a tomb that was hewn in stone, where never man had yet lain' (xxiii. 53). Mark uses a different word, 'wound,' but the idea seems much the same. Luke's statement that the tomb was 'hewn in stone,' employing an adjective frequently used of dressed stone, may perhaps imply that there was masonry at the entrance, as in the case of sepulchres which were 'built' and 'adorned' (Luke xi. 47–8; Matt. xxiii. 29); the same adjective is used in the Septuagint to translate Pisgah (Deut.

iv. 49 ; cf. Num. xxi. 20, xxiii. 14 ; Deut. iii. 27), which Jerome in his 'Onomasticon' explains as meaning 'abscisum,'[1] steep or precipitous. The literal meaning of the word, therefore, can hardly be pressed, and it is practically a synonym for 'hewn in the rock,' though we might perhaps translate 'fashioned in rock,' to keep the root idea. Mark says the tomb was 'hewn out of rock,' probably the earliest interpretation of Luke's adjective, but Matthew develops the statement, and speaks of 'his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock.' Remembering his description of Joseph as 'a rich man,' we may perhaps see the influence of Isaiah liii. 9, 'they made his grave . . . with the rich.' At any rate it seems probable that we have an interpretative addition of the evangelist, not evidence of a different tradition. We notice that the fourth gospel does not repeat the statement. Luke says further that the tomb was one 'where never man had yet lain,' suggesting that, as was usual, it was intended for the reception of more than one corpse, though as yet none had been laid in it. Mark gives no information on the point, but

[1] P.L., xxiii. col. 867 ; cf. Eusebius's Greek text in Lagarde, *Onomastica Sacra*, p. 237.

Matthew says that it was 'new.' John combines the statements of Luke and Matthew, and says that it was 'a new tomb wherein was never man yet laid' (xix. 41). Luke says nothing about any closing of the tomb, and with this John agrees, but Mark says Joseph 'rolled a stone against the door of the tomb' (xv. 46), and Matthew repeats almost the same words. It is at this point that Luke tells us that 'it was the day of the Preparation, and the sabbath drew on' (xxiii. 54), not as in Mark to explain Joseph's part in the burial, but presumably as a reason for the choice of the new tomb and the haste in disposing of the body. Again John combines the two ideas, this time those of Mark and Luke, and though he has explained the intervention of the Jews, and so apparently of Joseph, as due to the fact that it was the Preparation, he is equally clear that it was the same fact which determined the choice of the new tomb. 'Now in the place where he was crucified there was a garden; and in the garden a new tomb wherein was never man yet laid. There then because of the Jews' Preparation (for the tomb was nigh at hand) they laid Jesus' (xix. 41–42). If this explanation of the selection of a sepulchre be correct we

have further evidence that the statement of Matthew that the tomb was Joseph's is not historical. It seems probable indeed that the tomb may have been intended merely as a temporary, not as a final, resting-place. This view seems implied in Mary Magdalene's question to Jesus recorded in the fourth gospel. 'She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast laid him' (xx. 15). If it were Joseph's tomb, and the burial intended to be final, such a question to the gardener would surely have been quite impossible.

Luke continues 'And the women, which had come with him out of Galilee, followed after, and beheld the tomb, and how that his body was laid' (xxiii. 55). The intention of the evangelist seems to be to provide evidence of the reality of the burial, the fact 'that he was buried,' as St. Paul says (1 Cor. xv. 4), being an important item in early Christian tradition, not to tell us that the women watched the details of the burial. 'The women . . . followed after,' and even if not 'afar off' they were probably some distance away. If at the well of Sychar our Lord's disciples 'marvelled that he was speaking with a woman' (John iv. 27), and

the doctors of the law laid it down that 'a man should not salute a woman in a public place, not even his own wife,'[1] it is clear that a company of women would not venture to intrude upon so important a person as a member of the Sanhedrin even to offer assistance. According to both Mark and Matthew the women must have seen the stone rolled to the door of the tomb before they left, but Luke, as we have noticed, says nothing of this. According to his account as soon as the women had evidence that our Lord's body was being buried 'they returned,' and in the short time which remained before the sabbath prevented it 'prepared spices and ointments.' Apparently Nicodemus, of whom we are not told that he had anything to do with the taking of our Lord's body down from the cross, if he had appeared on the scene at all, had not arrived with the spices of which John speaks when the women departed from the tomb, for had they known of these, or expected them to be provided, they would not have returned to make similar preparations themselves. Even if we suppose the

[1] Westcott, *St. John*, p. 74. See Taylor, *Sayings of the Jewish Fathers*; *Pirqe Aboth*, I. 5, p. 15; Buxtorf, *Lexicon Chaldaicum Talmudicum et Rabbinicum*, p. 1146.

body to have been made ready within the court of the tomb itself, they could not well have failed to notice the arrival of so bulky a quantity of spices as John describes. Mark mentions only two of 'the women, which had come with him out of Galilee,' spoken of by Luke, and says that 'Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses beheld where he was laid' (xv. 47). The last words are evidently another version of what St. Luke says, which we have interpreted as meaning that they saw that the body was buried, and, in view of the attitude of such high personages as Joseph to women, whether strangers or even friends, they cannot be interpreted differently, or as meaning that they saw the body in the loculus, or other place provided. Had Mark meant this the words attributed to the angel in the sepulchre, 'Behold, the place where they laid him' (xvi. 6), would be robbed of much of their point. The women beheld where he was laid, that is, the position of the tomb, which after all is the most natural interpretation of the words. Mark mentions Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses at this point, but we notice the absence of Salome, who, he says, was present at the cross. If she is to be identified with the mother of Zebedee's children, it seems not

improbable, as is sometimes suggested, that she went away from the cross immediately after our Lord's death to join her son John and the mother of Jesus, whose departure at an earlier stage is recorded in the fourth gospel (xix. 27). Matthew also mentions Mary Magdalene and the other Mary, but not Salome, and says they were 'sitting over against the sepulchre' (xxvii. 61), which is an elaboration of what Mark says, and directly contradicts Luke, who says that they went home. John says nothing at all about the women in connexion with the burial, not even that they were spectators, confirming the view that they had nothing to do with it, though they may have watched at a distance. John alone tells us of the part played by Nicodemus. 'And there came also Nicodemus, he who at the first came to him by night, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pound weight. So they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in linen cloths with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury' (xix. 39–40). The amount of myrrh and aloes is large, over seventy pounds in modern weight, but the reference to Jewish custom helps us to understand how it was all utilised. Of King Asa we are told 'they buried him in his own sepulchres, . . . and laid him in

the bed which was filled with sweet odours and divers kinds of spices prepared by the apothecaries' art' (2 Chron. xvi. 14). 'The linen cloths' and 'the napkin' mentioned in the story of the resurrection were presumably part of the provision made by Nicodemus for use with the spices, and are not to be identified with the 'linen cloth,' or sheet, in which out of reverence Joseph wrapped the naked body of Jesus for removal from the cross to the sepulchre. Luke continues 'And on the sabbath they rested according to the commandment' (xxiii. 56). The same thing is implied in Mark's statement that it was 'when the sabbath was past' that they bought spices (xvi. 1). Matthew says that on the sabbath, which he curiously calls 'the day after the Preparation,' 'the chief priests and the Pharisees were gathered together unto Pilate,' asking him to command 'that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest haply his disciples come and steal him away' (xxvii. 62–64). It seems a very poor excuse for a breach of the sabbath, for if a guard were necessary it should have been appointed on Friday afternoon. At that time, however, the thought that His disciples might come and steal the body never seems to have occurred to them, their one anxiety

being to get rid of our Lord's body before sunset to avoid a profanation of the sabbath even by inadvertence, a very minor breach of the law compared with that involved in their appeal to Pilate, where the offence was deliberate and without the excuse of necessity. If our Lord's body had been consigned to one of the common graves for criminals, it would have been comparatively easy for the disciples to steal it, and yet on the Friday afternoon such a speedy burial was all they seemed to desire or asked of Pilate. Neither do they seem to have raised any objection to the body being handed over to Joseph, who, if not known to be a disciple, was obviously a friend, though this was surely playing into the hands of those who would counterfeit a resurrection. Their desire for security against theft, if historical, must have been an afterthought, and one which involved an entire change of policy in a night. The story forms one of a number peculiar to the first gospel in which there is a distinct bias in favour of the marvellous, as we see in the accounts of the earthquakes at the death and resurrection (xxvii. 51, xxviii. 2), and it is difficult not to believe that we are dealing with a legendary accretion. Matthew himself seems to have recognised one of the objections to its

historicity, but he hardly removes it, though he makes it less obvious, by calling the sabbath 'the day after the Preparation.' For details of the story the author seems to have been influenced by two Old Testament narratives, each concerned with the rolling of a stone or stones to the mouth of a cave or pit. The first is the story of the five kings who hid in the cave at Makkedah. 'And Joshua said, Roll great stones unto the mouth of the cave, and set men by it for to keep them' (Josh. x. 18). The second is the story of Daniel in the lions' den, 'And a stone was brought, and laid upon the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet, and with the signet of his lords' (Dan. vi. 17). According to Matthew also it was on the afternoon of the sabbath, as the first day of the week was approaching, if we interpret the Greek verb used as in Luke, that the women came to see the sepulchre, 'late on the sabbath day, as it began to draw towards the first day of the week' (xxviii. 1). Probably, however, the evangelist has misunderstood his source, and for the moment at any rate seems to have thought that with Jews, as with Gentiles, a new day began not with the darkness but with the dawn.

CHAPTER III

THE VISIT OF THE WOMEN TO THE TOMB

LUKE, as we have seen, says that the women prepared the spices on the Friday afternoon after their return from the sepulchre, before the sabbath began, but Mark on Saturday evening after the sabbath was over, presumably because, as he says the women stayed at the tomb until the burial was completed and a stone rolled to the door, there was no time left for anything after their return from the sepulchre before the beginning of the sabbath. We read: 'And when the sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome, bought spices, that they might come and anoint him' (xvi. 1). We notice the reappearance of Salome, who according to Mark was absent on the Friday afternoon when Luke tells us the spices were purchased. The purchase of the spices in Mark, however, is merely preliminary to the visit of the

women to the tomb on the Sunday morning, and what the evangelist is really anxious that we shall understand is that she was present on that occasion, though according to Luke, as when he tells us the women who ministered to Jesus, the third name is Joanna, for speaking of those who came to the sepulchre he says 'they were Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James' (xxiv. 10). Luke is quite definite in his statement of the reason for the visit of the women to the tomb on the Sunday morning: 'On the first day of the week, at early dawn, they came unto the tomb, bringing the spices which they had prepared' (xxiv. 1). According to Mark the purpose is the same, but in Matthew, presumably because his story of the guard has made any such intention manifestly impossible, they came simply 'to see the sepulchre.' According to the Talmud it was customary to visit the corpse in the tomb until the third day when, corruption having set in, there could be no doubt that the soul had left the body and the person was dead. We read, 'They go out to the cemetery and make inquisition concerning the dead for three days, and are not deterred lest it seem an Amorite practice.'[1]

[1] *Semachoth*, viii. § 1. Quotation kindly supplied by Dr. Abrahams.

It is not till he speaks of the visit to the sepulchre that Luke mentions the stone for the first time, 'And they found the stone rolled away from the tomb' (xxiv. 2). The same is true in the fourth gospel. Nothing is said about it until we are told that Mary Magdalene 'seeth the stone taken away from the tomb' (xx. 1). John's words agree with those he uses when speaking of the grave of Lazarus, and probably the tomb was of a similar type in both cases, both being private burial places. We read: 'Jesus . . . cometh to the tomb. Now it was a cave, and a stone lay against it. Jesus saith, Take ye away the stone . . . So they took away the stone' (John xi. 38–39, 41).

Mark's account is very detailed. 'And very early on the first day of the week, they come to the tomb, when the sun was risen. And they were saying among themselves, Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the tomb? And looking up, they see that the stone is rolled back: for it was exceeding great' (xvi. 2–4). Luke says 'they found the stone rolled away,' but in Mark the emphasis is on what they saw, 'looking up, they see that the stone is rolled back.' The reason for his statement

that they came 'when the sun was risen' is now apparent, the other evangelists agreeing that it was before daybreak, 'at early dawn' according to Luke, 'as it began to dawn' according to Matthew, and according to John 'while it was yet dark.' As we read Mark's account of the conversation of the women we are bound to ask, Is it credible? The women, we are told, had been looking on when a stone, which was 'very great,' was rolled to the door of the tomb. The evangelist evidently intends us to understand that to move it was beyond the power of three women, and he tells us that this was their own opinion. They had a whole day in which to think over their plans with regard to what they wished to do to the Lord's body, they went to the trouble and expense of buying spices, they rose very early on the first day of the week to bring them to the tomb, all without thinking of the difficulty of moving the stone and arranging with someone to move it for them. It seems very improbable. In view of the silence of both Luke and John with respect to the closing of the sepulchre it would appear not unreasonable to suppose that the stone had never been rolled to the mouth of the tomb at all, at any rate not since the work-

men who prepared the tomb and stone departed. The words quoted from the Talmud are sometimes interpreted as implying that graves were ordinarily left unclosed for three days, but however that may be, if, as seems not unlikely, the sepulchre in this case was regarded only as a temporary resting-place, this would be exactly what we should expect, for even if the labour was not great, Joseph would perhaps hesitate to close someone else's tomb. Luke's words do not necessarily imply that the stone had been rolled away recently, or indeed at all, apart from the trial closing by the masons who fitted it. The emphasis is on the fact not on the action which produced it, as frequently with verbs of similar meaning in the perfect tense.[1] It is possible that the evangelist, and even the women themselves, whether the tomb was regarded as a temporary or permanent resting-place, expected that the tomb would be found closed, but this would surely occasion no serious difficulty, for Mark's statement that the stone was 'very great' is probably only an interpretative addition for purposes of edification, like the

[1] Cf. 1 Cor. vii. 27 *b*, where the reference can hardly be to widowers only.

conversation of the women, of which indeed it is the basis. Luke says nothing about the size of the stone, and it is very unlikely that it was unusually large. There is no suggestion of difficulty in moving the stone in the account of the raising of Lazarus. It was probably a circular disc, such as was usually provided for a tomb, and this is perhaps implied in Mark's expression 'rolled back,' though possibly not in 'rolled away' which all the synoptic gospels use. As a rule such a stone would be no more than four feet in diameter, and, rolling in the groove provided, could be moved with no great difficulty by one man, and so could scarcely be regarded as an insuperable obstacle by three women. The customary visiting of the corpse for three days of which we have spoken, unless as some suppose the grave was left unclosed, implies the same thing. A mediæval commentary on the words quoted from the Talmud above says, 'This custom only applied in ancient times when burial was in the *kokim*, and it was easy to raise the coffin lid.'[1] Though the reference to the coffin lid is an anachronism, the writer is surely correct in assuming that such a

[1] *Turim. Tur Yoreh Deâh*, § 394. Quotation kindly supplied by Dr. Abrahams.

visit to the corpse as the Talmud describes would only be possible when the body was easily accessible, which he concludes was the case in the *kokim*, and so, of course, in other similar burial places. Mark says that Joseph 'rolled a stone against the door of the tomb.' 'A stone' is a very unnatural way of speaking of the stone specially provided for the sepulchre. Mark's phraseology, however, reminds us of that of the story of Jacob at the well. 'And he looked, and behold a well in the field, . . . and the stone upon the well's mouth was great . . . and they rolled the stone from the well's mouth, . . . and put the stone again upon the well's mouth in its place. . . . And he said . . . Water ye the sheep. . . . And they said, We cannot, until all the flocks be gathered together, and they roll the stone from the well's mouth . . . And it came to pass . . . that Jacob went near, and rolled the stone from the well's mouth' (Gen. xxix. 2, 3, 7, 8, 10). In the Greek the first time the stone is mentioned there is no article, and it is really 'a stone,' though it cannot well be so translated in English. The Greek word translated 'roll away' is found only in this passage in the Septuagint, and in the New Testament only in the synoptic gospels

in the accounts of the resurrection. 'And he looked and behold' reminds us of 'And looking up, they see,' with the redundant participle. 'The stone . . . was great' is exactly reproduced in 'the stone . . . it was great exceedingly,' though the identity of expression is not so obvious in the English. We thus get also an explanation of the awkwardness of Mark's Greek which otherwise it is not easy to find. 'They will roll away the stone from the mouth of the well,' as it is in the Septuagint, apart from changes in the preposition and nouns necessitated by the circumstances, is repeated even to the order of words in 'Who shall roll us away the stone from the door of the tomb?' In both accounts expression is given to the difficulty of rolling away the stone, though in Genesis it is properly moral rather than physical. The same story seems also to have influenced Mark's earlier statement, 'he rolled a stone against the door of the tomb,' for there likewise we notice a reproduction of phraseology from the narrative in Genesis. It seems difficult to resist the conclusion that the whole story of the stone as given in the second gospel is an interpretative expansion of the simple statement of Luke that when the women arrived at

the sepulchre they found the stone rolled away. The influence of the story of Jacob can hardly be doubted, and it would have full scope in oral transmission. Matthew continues the process of development. Of Joseph he says 'he rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb' (xxvii. 60). Here we seem to notice the influence of another Old Testament incident, of Saul at Michmash, 'And he said . . . Roll a great stone to me this day' (1 Sam. xiv. 33). Besides the similar use of the adjective 'great' to describe the stone, both Matthew and the Septuagint employ the dative where Mark has a preposition with the accusative. To account for the removal of the stone Matthew introduces a mighty portent, 'And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone, and sat upon it' (xxviii. 2). The passage is quite in the style of other sections peculiar to Matthew, full of the miraculous and Old Testament phraseology. An earthquake is a common apocalyptical phenomenon. We read in Ezekiel 'In that day there shall be a great earthquake . . . and all the men that are upon the face of the earth, shall quake at my presence' (xxxviii. 19–20), and

in agreement with the prophecy Matthew also adds 'the watchers did quake.' The exact words of the evangelist occur no less than six times in the New Testament, so that 'there was a great earthquake' was evidently a familiar way of describing the intervention of the supernatural (Matt. viii. 24, xxviii. 2; Acts xvi. 26; Rev. vi. 12, xi. 13, xvi. 18). 'The angel of the Lord' is a common Old Testament expression to describe a manifestation of God in personal form, appearing also four times in Matthew (i. 20, 24; ii. 13, 19), twice in Luke (i. 11; ii. 9) in the birth narratives, and four times in Acts (v. 19; viii. 26; xii. 7, 23), in addition to the present passage. 'The angel of the Lord' called unto Abraham twice 'from heaven' (Gen. xxii. 11, 15), 'The Lord descended' upon Sinai (Exod. xxxiv. 5), and 'The angel of the Lord came and sat' under the oak at Ophrah (Jud. vi. 11), all suggesting the phraseology of the present passage. The influence of the story of Jacob at the well appears in Matthew as well as in Mark, the five Greek words for 'and came and rolled away the stone' being repeated without the slightest modification even in order from a passage already quoted (in another translation), 'Jacob came and rolled away the

stone from the well's mouth.' Though 'the angel of the Lord came and sat' under the oak at Ophrah, as the words immediately preceding 'and sat upon it' are taken from the story of Jacob at the well, it seems not unlikely that in these last words we have also a reminiscence of the similar story of Moses at the well in which, according to the Septuagint, we are told that 'he sat upon' it (Exod. ii. 15). The account given in Matthew is exactly what a person steeped in the Old Testament would imagine as an explanation of the fact that the stone was found rolled away, but it can hardly be regarded as in the strict sense history. The evidence indeed seems to point rather to the conclusion that the tomb had never been closed, and that the stones in Mark and Matthew are interpretative developments, or from another point of view, legendary accretions, such as with oral transmission would be inevitable. The reason for the rolling away of the stone in view of the nature of our Lord's resurrection body has frequently been a difficulty, and the favourite explanation has been that of Bishop Horsley, that it 'was not to let the Lord out, but to let the women in.'[1] Such a view, however, is

[1] *Nine Sermons on . . . our Lord's Resurrection*, p. 202.

unnecessary when the narratives are critically examined. It is interesting to note further developments in the story of the stone. In 'Codex Bezae' and some other manuscripts we are told at this point in Matthew that Joseph, 'when he had laid him, placed at the tomb a stone which scarcely twenty men could roll.' In the 'Gospel of Peter' the idea is still further elaborated: 'There came elders and scribes to the sepulchre and having rolled a great stone with the centurion and soldiers, all who were there together, placed it at the door of the tomb.'[1] This account is especially remarkable as containing a tradition in exact agreement with what we have concluded on critical grounds, that Joseph left the tomb unclosed, though of course we need not believe that the centurion and soldiers, elders and scribes combined to remedy the omission, rolling so great a stone to the entrance.

Luke continues, 'And they entered in, and found not the body (of the Lord Jesus)' (xxiv. 3). Mark gives the first part only, 'And entering into the tomb' (xvi. 5), but says nothing about their not finding the body, and presumably they do not realise

[1] Swete, *Gospel of St. Peter*, chap. viii. p. 26; cf. Lake, *Resurrection of Jesus Christ*, p. 152.

that the body is absent until the angel speaks and points it out. John does not actually say that they failed to find the body, but it is presupposed in the report of Mary Magdalene to Peter, ' They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him ' (xx. 2), and the similar words to the angel in the sepulchre. John evidently supports Luke's statement that the women noticed the absence of the body before the appearance of the angels. We notice that Luke repeats the tradition he incorporates in his text in the words attributed to the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. ' Moreover certain women of our company amazed us, having been early at the tomb; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive ' (xxiv. 22–3).

CHAPTER IV

ECSTASIES RECORDED BY ST. LUKE

We have now to consider one of the most difficult incidents of all those which happened on the first Easter morning, what the two disciples called the 'vision of angels.' If we compare it with other similar accounts it is clear that it was a vision received in a state of ecstasy. Such visions occupy an important position in both the Old Testament and the New, and indeed in the history of religion wellnigh at all times and in all places. In the Old Testament many such visions are recorded. They were specially characteristic of prophets (Joel ii. 28, etc.), and were vouchsafed to them frequently at their call, but not seldom at other times besides. We note them particularly in the case of Balaam (Num. xxiv. 16), Micaiah (1 Kings xxii. 19), Isaiah (Is. vi. 1), Jeremiah (Jer. i. 11, 13), Ezekiel (Ezek. i. 1, etc.), Amos (Amos vii. 1, 4, 7; viii. 1; ix. 1), and

Zechariah (Zech. i. 8). The book of Daniel is in a different category, but a large part of it is taken up with a description of such visions. In the New Testament, after the vision of the day of Pentecost, Peter declares that Christianity is a religion of visions, and that the prophecy of Joel (ii. 28) is fulfilled (Acts ii. 17). Paul glories in such 'visions and revelations of the Lord' (2 Cor. xii. 1–5). Several of those vouchsafed to both Peter and Paul are recorded, but we find also descriptions of those granted to various other people. We notice them particularly in the writings of St. Luke, but also elsewhere. Of visions in ecstasy Luke describes no less than thirteen apart from visions received by night, which perhaps are not really to be distinguished any more than in the case of the Old Testament prophets, and a few of doubtful type which from what we are told might belong to one group or the other. Visions in ecstasy were granted to Zacharias in the temple, to Mary, to the shepherds, at our Lord's baptism, at the transfiguration, at the sepulchre, at the ascension, at Pentecost, to St. Stephen, to St. Paul at his conversion, to Cornelius, to Peter on the housetop, and to Paul in the temple at Jerusalem. The night visions are

all St. Paul's, and we notice his vision of the man of Macedonia, of our Lord at Corinth, and at Jerusalem, and of the angel of God on the ship. Of the visions more indefinite in type we note the angel of the Lord who spake to Philip, the vision of Ananias, and of St. Paul in which he saw Ananias, and if the text is authentic, as seems not improbable from both internal and external evidence, the angel who appeared to our Lord in Gethsemane. The appearances of the angel to the apostles and to St. Peter in prison ought not perhaps to be regarded as supernatural, though at the time they were so understood. Luke's descriptions of these ecstatic visions are remarkable for the frequent recurrence of certain characteristic ideas and phrases, many of which, however, are by no means uncommon in the accounts of similar experiences recorded elsewhere, as even a slight acquaintance with mystical literature makes plain. The story of the transfiguration as given by Luke is particularly interesting from this point of view, for in it the details characteristic of an ecstasy are given with a fullness not found in the other New Testament accounts. We read: 'Now Peter and they that were with him were weighed down with sleep, but

remaining fully awake, they saw his glory' (ix. 32). Similarly of Balaam we read 'He saith . . . which seeth the vision of the Almighty, falling down, and having his eyes open' (Num. xxiv. 4, 16). In the Septuagint instead of 'falling down' we find 'in sleep,' a common method of describing a trance or ecstasy, as we notice in the case of Abraham (Gen. xv. 12), and Daniel (viii. 18; x. 9). St. Teresa gives an exactly similar description of a state of ecstasy. 'She is thoroughly awake to God, though fast asleep as to worldly things and to ourselves.'[1] A study of the various types of ecstasy described in St. Teresa's 'Interior Castle,' and similar works,[2] is of the greatest value for a proper understanding of the New Testament examples. St. Teresa speaks only of visions vouchsafed to individuals, but it seems beyond question that an ecstasy may take hold of a group of people at the same time, so that they may see a vision in common,[3]

[1] *Interior Castle: The Fifth Mansions* (ed. Dalton), chap. i. p. 97. Dalton's is the translation usually quoted in these pages, but occasionally another is preferred.

[2] See also James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*; and Poulain, *The Graces of Interior Prayer*.

[3] Summing up the evidence Schmiedel says, 'That in circumstances of general excitement and highly strung expectation visions are contagious, and that others easily perceive that which at first had been seen by only one,

and this was the case we are told in several of the examples Luke describes. A detailed study of the instances of ecstasy in the New Testament would be interesting, but here we can only notice the occurrence of the most characteristic mystical phraseology. The vision took place during prayer, the most usual occasion, according to St. Teresa and other ecstatics, at our Lord's baptism, at the transfiguration, in the case of Cornelius, of Peter on the housetop, and of Paul in the temple at Jerusalem, the same thing also being suggested in the case of Zacharias. Heaven is said to have been opened at our Lord's baptism, in the visions of St. Stephen and St. Peter, as in those of Ezekiel (i. 1), and St. John the Divine (Rev. xix. 11), the same thing being implied at the ascension, at Pentecost, and at the conversion of St. Paul. The vision is of 'two men' at the transfiguration, and at the sepulchre, and of 'a man' to Cornelius. At

is, in view of the accumulated evidence, a fact not to be denied' (*Encyclopædia Biblica*, iv. col. 4083–4). The suggestion, however, that one person communicates the details of his vision to the rest is normally impossible in an ecstasy. Except when the ecstasy is incomplete, as apparently with St. Stephen, there is an entire alienation of the sensible faculties, and a person is quite unable to impart the nature of his vision to another until the rapture is over.

the sepulchre and in the case of Cornelius they are also spoken of as angels, while to Zacharias, to Mary, and to the shepherds the vision is said to be of angels. At the transfiguration, at the sepulchre, at the ascension, and in the vision of Cornelius the men appear in white and shining garments. 'His garment seems like the finest linen,'[1] says St. Teresa of one seen in a vision. There is a manifestation of glory to the shepherds, at the transfiguration, to St. Stephen, and to St. Paul, and it is suggested at the sepulchre, at the ascension, at Pentecost, and in the vision of Cornelius. St. Teresa describes what is seen as a 'glorious image,' 'its lustre is, as it were, a transfused light, and, like that of the sun, covered with something as beautiful and as bright as a diamond, if it could be made so.'[1] The position in which the visitant is seen, or the manner of his advent, is usually described by the verb 'stand,' or one of its compounds, the exact form of the word found in the accounts of the visions of the shepherds and of the women at the sepulchre (cf. Acts xii. 7) being that used in classical literature for similar appearances, other forms being employed in the description

[1] *The Sixth Mansions*, chap. ix. p. 186.

of the vision of Zacharias, of the transfiguration, of the ascension, of Stephen, and of Cornelius. In the vision of Zacharias, at the transfiguration, at Pentecost, and at the conversion of St. Paul the word 'appeared' is used. To Zacharias the angel appears on the 'right' side of the altar of incense, to Stephen our Lord appears on the 'right' hand of God, and according to Mark the angel in the sepulchre is seated on the 'right' side. In the vision of Zechariah Satan is seen standing at the 'right' hand of Joshua (Zech. iii. 1, but cf. Ps. cix. 6). In the apocalyptic passages of the New Testament the 'right' hand of God is the position of the exalted Christ, or Son of man, in accordance with the Psalm, 'Sit thou at my right hand' (cx. 1), and in the visions of the Apocalypse it is always the 'right' hand which is noted (Rev. i. 16, 17, 20; ii. 1; v. 1, 7; x. 5; xiii. 16), never the left, just as in the vision of Enoch it is by the 'right' hand that Michael seizes him (lxxi. 3). Speaking of a vision of our Lord, St. Teresa likewise tells us 'she saw Him on her right hand,'[1] though, in contrast, in other visions she says she saw St. Peter and St. Paul, and one of the cherubim on her

[1] *The Sixth Mansions*, chap. vi. p. 180.

left.[1] At the ascension, and in the visions of Stephen, Cornelius, and Peter on the housetop those in the ecstasy are said to have 'gazed' upon the vision, verbs of seeing being naturally prominent in anything which can be called a vision, whether scriptural or otherwise. At the transfiguration and the ascension a cloud appears, as in the visions of Ezekiel (i. 4; x. 4), Daniel (vii. 13), the Apocalypse (x. 1; xi. 12; xiv. 14–16), in the apocalyptical passages of the gospels, and generally in descriptions of the manifestation of God. A voice is heard at our Lord's baptism, at the transfiguration, at Pentecost, by St. Paul at his conversion, and by St. Peter, as in the vision of Ezekiel (iii. 12), and frequently in the visions of the Apocalypse, and in ecstatic visions very generally. Zacharias, Mary, and the women at the sepulchre were troubled at the vision. Zacharias, Mary, the shepherds, the apostles at the transfiguration, the women at the tomb, and Cornelius were afraid. St. Teresa says 'the presence of such surpassing majesty inspires the soul with great fear,' and that the vision 'disturbs all the powers and senses with great terror.'[2] The term 'vision' (not

[1] *Life*, chap. xxix. §§ 6, 16 pp. 261, 266.
[2] *The Sixth Mansions*, chap. ix. pp. 186, 188.

always the same Greek word) is applied in Luke to the appearance of the angel to Zacharias, of the two men at the tomb, of Jesus to St. Paul at his conversion, of the angel to Cornelius, and of the vessel full of unclean things to Peter on the housetop. and in Matthew to the transfiguration. Peter on the housetop and Paul in the temple at Jerusalem are said to have been in an ecstasy, while according to Mark an ecstasy held the women at the sepulchre.

CHAPTER V

THE BAPTISM OF OUR LORD

THE significance of certain of the visions recorded by Luke must now be examined at length. At first sight it might be supposed that the vision vouchsafed at our Lord's baptism was to Jesus alone, and the words 'he saw' of Mark and Matthew support such a conclusion. Luke's account, however, is more impersonal, and the descent of the Holy Ghost 'in a bodily form, as a dove, upon him' suggests the point of view of a second person, and, if so, presumably of John the Baptist. In the fourth gospel we are told quite plainly that this was the case: 'John bare witness, saying, I have beheld the Spirit descending as a dove out of heaven; and it abode upon him' (i. 32). Luke continues, 'A voice came out of heaven, Thou art my Son, the beloved; in thee I am well pleased' (iii. 22). We can hardly fail to notice an echo of Isaiah xlii. 1, 'Behold

my servant, whom I uphold; my chosen, in whom my soul delighteth.' The Greek word for 'servant' may equally be translated 'child,' and so could be regarded as a synonym for 'son.' 'Behold the blood of the covenant' (Exod. xxiv. 8) of the Old Testament becomes in the Greek of the New 'This is the blood of the covenant' (Heb. ix. 20), and so quite reasonably 'Behold my servant' or 'child' might appear as 'This is my son,' the form the saying actually takes in Matthew and at the transfiguration, or, if the second person is employed, 'Thou art my son,' which would reproduce Psalm ii. 7. Quoting Isaiah xlii. 1 in another place (xii. 18), Matthew renders the Hebrew for 'my chosen' as 'my beloved,' evidently regarding the two expressions as equivalent, an idea confirmed by the fact that Luke gives 'the chosen' at the transfiguration where Mark and Matthew have 'the beloved.' In the same passage Matthew also substitutes 'is well pleased' for 'delighteth,' so that the connexion between the saying and Isaiah xlii. 1 is beyond question.[1] These words of Isaiah are part of the description of the ideal servant of Jehovah, such a one as He would

[1] See Robinson, *Ephesians*, pp. 229–33.

choose, and in whom He would be well pleased, which is set before His actual servant Israel for a pattern and encouragement. John the Baptist evidently realised the quotation from Isaiah when he greeted Jesus with the words, 'Behold the Lamb of God, which beareth the sin of the world' (John i. 29). They are taken from another servant passage, Isaiah lii. 13—liii. 12. 'Behold, my servant,' 'as a lamb that is led to the slaughter,' 'he bare the sin of many.' According to the fourth gospel John said further: 'I have seen, and have borne witness that this is the Son of God' (i. 34). This is not a late Christological statement, as is often supposed, but a reference to the saying of the voice from heaven in which the servant of Jehovah is the son of God. It is interesting to compare the words of John with a passage in the book of Wisdom which is clearly based upon the servant passages of Isaiah and quite plainly identifies the servant of Jehovah as His son: 'He . . . nameth himself servant of the Lord . . . He is grievous unto us even to behold . . . And he vaunteth that God is his father . . . For if the righteous man is God's son, he will uphold him . . . With outrage and torture let us put him to the test, that we may learn

his gentleness, and may prove his patience under wrong. Let us condemn him to a shameful death' (ii. 13, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20; cf. Is. xlii. 1; lii. 13; liii. 3, 7, 8, 11, 12).

It is clear that Jesus likewise understood the significance of the voice from heaven and the reference to Isaiah, and applies the prophet's words to Himself, what the prophet says both of the ideal servant and of the real, as also of himself, as he attempts to realise the picture of the ideal in his own life and work. 'I have put my Spirit upon him' (xlii. 1), Jehovah had said of His servant, and it was fulfilled in the descent of the Holy Ghost upon Jesus at His baptism. Returning in the power of the Spirit into Galilee He recognises a description of His own work in the passage He reads in the synagogue at Nazareth, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor . . .' (Luke iv. 18). It is from the description of the servant that He gained the conviction, so frequently expressed, that He too must suffer if He is to perform His work: 'The Son of man must suffer many things' (Luke ix. 22), 'And all the things that are written by the prophets shall be accomplished unto the Son of man' (Luke xviii. 31).

John the Baptist was steeped in the prophecies which bear the name of Isaiah. Practically all his sayings are traceable in either substance or phraseology to this source, so that it is natural that he should understand the voice from heaven at our Lord's baptism simply in terms of this book. Whatever may be the truth about our Lord 'having never learned,' it is plain that somehow or other He had gained a knowledge of 'letters' (John vii. 15), and particularly of the book of Enoch, which though composite in origin had apparently reached its present form in His days. We must note certain passages which have a bearing on our present discussion. 'And I asked the angel who went with me and shewed me all the hidden things, concerning that Son of Man, who he was, and whence he was, (and) why he went with the Head of Days? And he answered and said unto me: This is the Son of Man who hath righteousness, with whom dwelleth righteousness . . . Because the Lord of Spirits hath chosen him . . . And he shall be the light of the Gentiles, and the hope of those who are troubled of heart . . . In these days down-cast in countenance shall the kings of the earth have become . . . For they have denied

the Lord of Spirits and His Anointed . . . And he shall judge the secret things . . . For he is the Elect One before the Lord of Spirits according to His good pleasure . . . And one portion of them shall look on the other, and they shall be terrified . . . When they see that Son of Man sitting on the throne of his glory . . . And the righteous and elect shall be saved on that day . . . And the Lord of Spirits shall abide over them, and with that Son of Man shall they eat and lie down and rise up for ever and ever . . . For I and My Son will be united with them for ever' (xlvi. 2, 3; xlviii. 4, 8, 10; xlix. 4; lxii. 5, 13, 14; cv. 2).[1]

We notice the references to Isaiah, 'my Son,' 'the Elect One' or 'the Chosen,' 'according to His good pleasure,' the three points of Isaiah xlii. 1 contained in the saying of the voice from heaven at our Lord's baptism.[2] We recognise also allusions to other phrases in, or connected with, the servant passages of Isaiah, 'My righteous servant shall make many righteous' (liii. 11), 'I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, . . . for a light of the Gentiles' (xlii. 6),

[1] Charles, *The Book of Enoch*, pp. 86–8, 93–6, 123–5, 262–3.

[2] Cf. Eph. i. 5–6.

'The Lord hath anointed me . . . to bind up the brokenhearted' (lxi. 1). We note, too, the references to Psalm ii. 'The kings of the earth set themselves . . . against the Lord, and against his anointed' (2); 'The Lord said unto me, Thou art my son' (7). The servant of Jehovah is recognised as God's Son (Is. xlii. 1; Ps. ii. 7), the Son of Man spoken of by Daniel (vii. 13), and the anointed of the Lord, or the Christ, this being the first time that the technical use of this term is found in literature. What are at first sight contradictory conceptions are thus combined. There can be no reasonable doubt that our Lord understood the saying of the voice from heaven not only in accordance with the ideas of the prophecies of Isaiah, but also as these were developed and combined with other ideas in the book of Enoch. From the time of His baptism, therefore, Jesus regarded Himself as both the Servant, or Child, of God Who should suffer, and the Christ, the Son of God and the Son of man, Who should reign. It is the fact that He was conscious of Himself as being the Son of God in the fuller sense which gives point to the story of the temptations, whereby He put aside the idea of a public manifestation of His messiahship and the

low views of popular expectation. The difference between the Baptist's estimate of Jesus and that of those who were admitted to intimate relations with Him is very remarkable. To John He is the Son of God and Servant of Jehovah Who, as Isaiah had prophesied, would restore true religion to the world, both to Israel and to the Gentiles, and thus prepare the way of Jehovah. John himself is the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare ye the way of the Lord' (cf. John iii. 28), Jesus is the Agent by Whom that preparation is to be made so that all flesh may see the salvation of God. To Jesus' disciples He is very much more than this. Andrew can say, 'We have found the Messiah' (John i. 41), Philip, 'We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write' (John i. 45), and Nathanael, 'Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art King of Israel' (John i. 49). There is no need to suppose that the evangelist is projecting back into the earliest days of our Lord's career ideas which were not grasped until very much later; the sayings contain nothing which had not been announced by the voice from heaven. According to Luke, in the power of the Spirit bestowed in His baptism He declared Himself the Anointed of God

in the synagogue of Nazareth at the very beginning of His ministry (iv. 18), which explains how the man with the unclean spirit in the synagogue of Capernaum soon afterwards could acclaim Him, 'Jesus of Nazareth,' as 'the Holy One of God' (Luke iv. 34; Mark i. 24), an incident which, as recorded by Mark, is quite inexplicable, and so affords further evidence of the superiority of the narrative of Luke. John the Baptist, however, never seems to have advanced beyond the Isaianic interpretation of the saying of the voice from heaven until in prison he heard the rumours which arose about Jesus after the raising of the widow's son at Nain, that 'A great prophet is arisen among us: and, God hath visited his people' (Luke vii. 16). Varied as the Messianic expectation was, it is plain that up to this point John had not regarded 'the Servant of Jehovah,' spoken of by Isaiah, as the Messiah, in this agreeing with both earlier and later Jewish commentators, or even as the prophet who was to come, whether the prophet like unto Moses (Deut. xviii. 15) or Elijah himself (Mal. iv. 5). According to Jewish expectation, as recorded in the Talmudic tractate 'Sotah' (ix. 15), when Elijah came he would raise the dead, as he had

done of old (1 Kings xvii. 22). When it was known that the new Teacher had raised the widow's son it was natural that He should be identified with Elijah, the prophet who was to come, and this was evidently the report which had reached the Baptist. He had not, however, so understood the voice from heaven, important as he realised the work of Jesus to be. It is not in doubt but in eager expectation that he sends his two disciples to the Lord: 'Art thou he that cometh, or look we for another?' (Luke vii. 19–20). Although at first sight it might seem that Jesus gave no direct reply, apart from a public proclamation of Himself, which was contrary to His purpose, He said all that was possible. Like John's own sayings the answer was couched in the phraseology of Isaiah, but it clearly tended to encourage him in his expectation with regard to one who could raise the dead. 'Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good tidings preached to them. And blessed is he, whosoever shall find none occasion of stumbling in me' (Luke vii. 22–23). The popular view,

however, is raised to a higher level, and words spoken by Isaiah of Jehovah (viii. 14–15) Jesus applies to Himself. When the disciples of John had departed Jesus bears witness of him to the people, as John indeed had borne witness of Jesus. 'This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, who shall prepare thy way before thee' (Luke vii. 27; cf. Mal. iii. 1). To us these words are of special importance as revealing indirectly the opinion Jesus held of Himself. If John was the 'messenger' spoken of by the prophet, Jesus must have been 'the messenger of the covenant' Whose way he was to prepare. According to the rabbis 'the messenger of the covenant' is Elijah, of whom Malachi speaks but a few verses later, 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet' (iv. 5). The words which Matthew adds to the story as given by Luke, though possibly the evangelist misunderstood them (cf. Matt. xvii. 13), must refer properly to Jesus and not to John. 'And if ye are willing to receive it, this is Elijah, which is to come' (xi. 14). Yet the words of Malachi suggest much more than this. In the previous chapter, speaking in the name of Jehovah, he had said that the priest was 'the

messenger of the Lord of hosts,' and that His covenant was with Levi (ii. 4, 7, 8). The coming of 'the messenger of the covenant' must tell then of the coming of a faithful priest who shall restore the covenant which has been corrupted, and this priest he calls 'the Lord,' the Lord whom they were seeking (iii. 1). The reference apparently is to Psalm cx., and the expectation of the Messiah of which it tells, 'The Lord saith unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool . . . Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek' (1, 4). Jesus Himself interpreted the psalm of the Messiah (Luke xx. 41–44), and He cannot have failed to appreciate the fulness of its meaning. Testifying of John the Baptist He thus bears witness to Himself, that He is Elijah the prophet who was to come, the Lord who will sit at God's right hand, and the priest after the order of Melchizedek who will restore the covenant. The feast of the eucharist gains a fuller significance. It is the feast upon the sacrifice of the New Covenant (Luke xxii. 20; Mark xiv. 24), by which the atonement is made and the veil of the temple rent in the midst (Luke xxiii. 45), Elijah himself, according to the

'Targum Pseudo Jonathan' on Exod. xl. 10, being the high priest of Messianic days. At every celebration of the passover according to Jewish tradition a place was reserved for Elijah, and in the eucharist we have the paschal feast of the kingdom of God (Luke xxii. 15–16, 18), the Messianic banquet of which the prophets had told. Jesus in the institution of the eucharist shows Himself in His threefold office of prophet, priest, and king.

Not long after his deputation to Jesus John was beheaded, and Herod, hearing of the fame of Jesus, 'was much perplexed, because it was said by some, that John was risen from the dead; and by some, that Elijah had appeared; and by others, that one of the old prophets was risen again' (Luke ix. 7–8). We notice in particular the double expectation, that Elijah should come (Mal. iv. 5), and that the prophet like unto Moses should be raised up (Deut. xviii. 15), the phraseology used leaving no doubt about the identity of the prophet apart from other considerations. The people were full of this expectation. At one time they thought they saw Elijah, or 'the prophet,' in John the Baptist (John i. 21, 25), at another in Jesus, John himself sharing their

hope (Luke vii. 19). Jesus enquires about it of His disciples, 'Who do the multitudes say that I am? And they answering said, John the Baptist; but others say, Elijah; and others, that one of the old prophets is risen again' (Luke ix. 18–19). To the disciples, however, He was more. Men had 'reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether haply he were the Christ' (Luke iii. 15; cf. John i. 20, 25). After communing with Him Andrew saw the fulfilment of their expectation in Jesus, and confided his belief to his brother Simon, 'We have found the Christ' (John i. 41). At length in the fulness of experience Peter makes that tentative expression of faith in the deepest sense his own. 'He said unto them, But who say ye that I am? And Peter answering said, The Christ of God' (Luke ix. 20). The truth which had been revealed to Jesus at His baptism, at which so many times He had hinted to His disciples and the multitudes, yet with no explicit statement such as would forestall the discernment of faith, is now openly confessed, 'But he charged them, and commanded them to tell this to no man' (Luke ix. 21). And the reason is that it is but a one-sided statement of the truth, for the Son of God, Who is the

Son of Man and the Christ, is also the Child or Servant of Jehovah Who must suffer. 'The Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and the third day be raised up' (Luke ix. 21–22).

CHAPTER VI

THE TRANSFIGURATION AND THE ASCENSION OF OUR LORD

Now at length we are in a position to examine the second great vision of our Lord's career. 'He took with him Peter and John and James, and went up into the mountain to pray. And as he was praying, the fashion of his countenance was altered, and his raiment became white and dazzling. . . . Now Peter and they that were with him were weighed down with sleep, but remaining fully awake, they saw his glory, . . . And . . . there came a cloud, and overshadowed them' (Luke ix. 28–29, 32, 34). The last words are clearly based on the description of the tabernacle. 'The cloud overshadowed it, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle' (Exod. xl. 35). We are reminded of the words of the fourth gospel, 'The Word . . . tabernacled among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only

begotten from the Father' (John i. 14). The evangelist is describing what they saw with the eyes of the soul, not of the body, like Balaam, in an ecstasy, which in this case, as so often in the lives of ecstatics, came upon them in prayer. A type of vision described by St. Teresa has much in common. She calls it a 'glorious image,' and says 'its splendour, like that of the sun, dazzles the interior sight,' 'His garment seems like the finest linen,' 'He clearly makes Himself known to be the Lord of heaven and earth.'[1] Both Mark and Matthew omit much which is of value for a proper understanding of the vision; but Matthew says 'his face did shine as the sun,' a simile which appears also in the visions of St. John the Divine (Rev. i. 16; x. 1), and is used by St. Teresa. Matthew also adds that 'they fell on their face' (xvii. 6), a common detail in ecstatic visions. At the sepulchre the women 'bowed down their faces to the earth' (Luke xxiv. 5), and at his conversion Paul 'fell upon the earth' (Acts ix. 4). We see the same thing in the visions of Ezekiel (i. 28, iii. 23, ix. 8, xliii. 3, xliv. 4), Daniel (viii. 17), and St. John the Divine (Rev. xix. 10, xxii. 8).

[1] *The Sixth Mansions*, chap. ix. p. 186.

Luke says also, 'And behold, there talked with him two men, which were Moses and Elijah; who appeared in glory, and spake of his decease which he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem' (ix. 30–31). In the vision they are recognised without difficulty. St. Teresa says the same thing. 'If she should see any of the saints, she knows them as well as if she had conversed with them for a length of time.'[1] There was an expectation among the Jews that Moses and Elijah would appear together. The prophecy of Malachi might be taken to suggest it (iv. 4–5), particularly when taken in conjunction with the prophecy of Moses himself (Deut. xviii. 15, 18), and it is recorded in the Midrash on Deuteronomy, where we read that according to Jochanan ben Zakkai God said to Moses, 'If I send the prophet Elijah, ye must both come together.'[2] Moses and Elijah, we are told, spake of our Lord's decease which was to be accomplished or fulfilled, so that they are to be regarded as witnesses to the truth of the Old Testament scriptures, particularly, it would seem, of Isaiah liii., that the Son of God must

[1] *The Sixth Mansions*, chap. v. p. 159.

[2] *Debar. R.*, x. i; Volz, *Jüdische Eschatologie*, p. 193; Charles, *Revelation*, i. 281.

suffer, an idea the disciples were not ready to accept from Jesus, Peter indeed, according to Mark (viii. 32), rebuking our Lord when first He taught them the necessity of it. The Old Testament was summed up in 'the law and the prophets,' as we read so often (Luke xvi. 16, xxiv. 44; Acts xiii. 15, xxiv. 14; Matt. vii. 12, xxii. 40), and of the law and the prophets Moses and Elijah were the representatives, the scriptures of the Old Testament, as it were, personified. They had 'testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ' (1 Peter i. 11), and now in the vision they appear as present witnesses to confirm the truth of Jesus' own word. It marks an important stage in the realisation of what became so important an element in the Christian tradition, 'that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures' (1 Cor. xv. 3). The secondary character of the narrative of Mark is shown by the fact that he too, as well as Matthew, makes no mention of this the chief purpose of the vision. An interesting feature of the account is to be found in the suggestion of Peter, 'And it came to pass, as they were parting from him, Peter said unto Jesus, Master, it is good for us to be here: and let us make three tabernacles; one for thee, and one

for Moses, and one for Elijah : not knowing what he said ' (Luke ix. 33). We have here evidence that though a body of men may see much the same vision yet their attitude towards it varies according to differences of temperament or spiritual capacity, so that the message it conveys is not necessarily the same for all. When our Lord prophesied His death Peter rebuked Him, but when Moses and Elijah appeared in glory saying the same thing he wished to make the vision permanent, and to build three tabernacles, so that, as in the tabernacle of old with Jehovah, they might commune with His servants and listen to their words (Exod. xxv. 22). We see thus the special meaning of the message from heaven. ' And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, This is my Son, my chosen : hear ye him ' (Luke ix. 35). As at the baptism, but even more clearly according to Luke, who adopts the rendering ' the chosen ' instead of ' the beloved,' the earlier words have reference to the saying of Isaiah, ' Behold, my servant . . . my chosen ' (xlii. 1) ; and again we see the double interpretation is intended, that Jesus is the Son of God, the Servant of God Who must suffer as well as the Son of Man Who will reign ; but the last words give a new

turn to the meaning. 'Hear ye him' is undoubtedly an allusion to the prophecy of Moses, 'The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear' (Deut. xviii. 15). Clearly Jesus is the prophet who should be raised up, the new Moses: Him they must hear. As the Son of God He has full claim on their obedience, such as is not due to Moses and Elijah either as seen in the vision or as representing the Old Testament scriptures. The voice from heaven is a rebuke of Peter who would not accept his Master's word about His death until confirmed by Moses and Elijah; it is also the justification of the great claim of the sermon on the mount, 'Ye have heard that it was said to them of old time . . . but I say unto you' (Matt. v. 21–22). Both Moses and Elijah bear witness to Jesus in the vision of the transfiguration, but though the fulfilment of both it is as the new Moses that He is especially revealed by the voice from heaven. In many ways Mark seems to have failed to grasp the full significance of the transfiguration, but in an incident, not found in Luke, which he adds on to his account we find emphasis on our Lord's claim to be Elijah: 'And they asked

him, saying, The scribes say that Elijah must first come. And he said unto them, Elijah indeed cometh first, and restoreth all things: and how is it written of the Son of man, that he should suffer many things and be set at nought? But I say unto you, that Elijah is indeed come, and they do unto him whatsoever they list, even as it is written of him' (ix. 11–13). It is plain that it is the Son of man Who is Elijah, and not John the Baptist, as is commonly understood, for otherwise the words are unintelligible. Mark indeed says nothing whatever about the Baptist at this point, and though Matthew adds 'Then understood the disciples that he spake unto them of John the Baptist' (xvii. 13), if the words are not due to a misunderstanding of the evangelist, it was not long before they understood them differently. In his speech after the healing of the lame man Peter makes it plain not only that Jesus is the Christ, but also the new Elijah and the new Moses. 'Repent ye therefore, . . . that he may send the Christ who hath been appointed for you, even Jesus: whom the heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, whereof God spake by the mouth of his holy prophets which

have been since the world began (Mal. iv. 5, 6; cf. Mark ix. 12). Moses indeed said, A prophet shall the Lord God raise up unto you from among your brethren, like unto me; to him shall ye hearken in all things whatsoever he shall speak unto you' (Deut. xviii. 15, 18) (Acts iii. 19–22). Mark's sequel to the story of the transfiguration thus confirms our interpretation of the vision, but the words which Matthew adds to it suggest what is really a misunderstanding (cf. John i. 21).

Omitting for the present the vision at the sepulchre we will consider that at the ascension: 'And when he had said these things, as they were looking, he was taken up; and a cloud received him out of their sight. And while they were looking stedfastly into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye looking into heaven? this Jesus, which was received up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven' (Acts i. 9–11). At the end of the gospel Luke gives a much shorter account. According to what is perhaps the more probable text, found in 'Codex Bezae' and other manuscripts, we read, 'And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he

parted from them. And they returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, blessing God' (xxiv. 51–53). The cloud, the two men who stood by them in white apparel, and likewise the words 'he parted from them' in the gospel account remind us of the story of the transfiguration with the words 'they were parting from him.' Another phrase, 'they were looking stedfastly into heaven,' is repeated in the story of Stephen's vision, 'he . . . looked up stedfastly into heaven' (Acts vii. 55). The result of the vision was exactly what we find in the experience of ecstatics: 'They returned . . . with great joy, and were continually . . . blessing God' (Luke xxiv. 52–53). St. Teresa describes at length this 'great joy in the interior of the soul.' 'It is very painful to her being possessed with such a transport of joy to be silent . . . nor can she speak of anything else, except what proceeds from this her joy, the praises of God.'[1]

The phraseology of Luke's account in Acts is clearly based on that of the story of the assumption of Elijah: 'When the Lord would take up Elijah . . . into heaven, . . . as they still went on, and talked, . . .

[1] *The Sixth Mansions*, chap. vi. pp. 167–9.

behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, which parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up . . . into heaven. And Elisha saw it . . . And he saw him no more' (2 Kings ii. 1, 11–12). The 'parting' is mentioned in the gospel account, but according to 'Codex Bezae' and other authorities nothing is said about an ascension. Of the covering cloud we read also in accounts of the death of Moses. In an old apocryphal writing, probably to be identified with the 'Assumption of Moses,' according to an ancient Catena on the Pentateuch we are told that 'at what time Moses died a bright cloud encircled the place of the sepulchre, and so blinded the eyes of those who stood around that no one saw either the lawgiver die or the place where his corpse was buried.'[1] Josephus gives a similar account: 'And as he was going to embrace Eleazar and Joshua, and was still discoursing with them, a cloud stood over him on the sudden, and he disappeared in a certain valley, although he wrote in the holy books that he died, which was done out of fear, lest they should venture to say that, because of his extraordinary

[1] Fabricius, *Cod. Pseud. V.T.*, vol. ii. pp. 121-2. See *Encyclopædia Biblica*, i. col. 235.

virtue, he went to God.'[1] In describing our Lord's ascension Luke evidently had in mind the assumption of Elijah and the passing of Moses, and sees in it the fulfilment of what was prefigured in them, so that there is little room for doubt whom 'the two men in white apparel' are intended to represent. Again Moses and Elijah are His witnesses, and their witness is that of the Old Testament scriptures, the law and the prophets, which in Him are fulfilled.

[1] *Antiquities of the Jews*, bk. iv. chap. viii. § 48, p. 103 (Whiston's translation).

CHAPTER VII

THE VISION AT THE SEPULCHRE

Now at last we may return to a consideration of the women at the sepulchre when they found not the body of Jesus. Luke continues, 'And it came to pass, while they were perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel: and as they were affrighted, and bowed down their faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?' (xxiv. 4–5). Cleopas said that they saw a vision (Luke xxiv. 23), and the two men standing by them, the dazzling apparel, the fear, and the bowing of their faces to the earth are characteristic of visions. The question is reminiscent of injunctions of both the law and the prophets, 'Why seek ye about the living from the dead?' (Is. viii. 19); 'Seek them not out' (Lev. xix. 31). The words 'behold, two men stood by them in dazzling apparel,' save for the adjective 'dazzling'

instead of 'white,' are identical with what we noticed in the account of the ascension, and similar to those used in the description of the transfiguration. There can be little doubt but that again they are intended to represent Moses and Elijah, the scriptures of the Old Testament personified, as witnesses to the fact that He has risen and is alive. On the way to Jerusalem Jesus had taught them this. 'All the things that are written by the prophets shall be accomplished unto the Son of man. For . . . the third day he shall rise again,' but 'they understood none of these things; and this saying was hid from them, and they perceived not the things that were said' (Luke xviii. 31, 33, 34). The empty tomb conveyed no message to Peter and John, 'For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead' (John xx. 9), and to them no vision was vouchsafed. In ecstasy the women grasped the truth of that fact which is the most important element in the Christian tradition, and without which the Christian faith is vain, that, as St. Paul says, Christ 'hath been raised on the third day according to the scriptures' (1 Cor. xv. 2–4, 14). St. Teresa's description of a vision of a similar type helps us to grasp the kind of phe-

nomenon which occurred: 'When the soul is far from imagining that she is to see anything, and has not the least thought thereof, all at once the whole object is represented to her together; and this disturbs all the powers and senses with great terror, in order to place them afterwards in that blessed peace . . . and the soul is so fully instructed in sublime truths, that she stands in need of no other master.'[1] The lesson of the vision is that which Jesus had tried to teach them while yet present with them, as the angel reminded the women according to Luke, and that which He was so desirous of teaching after His resurrection, both to the disciples on the way to Emmaus and to the eleven and the rest on the first Easter evening. 'O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning from Moses and from all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself' (Luke xxiv. 25–27). 'These are my words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, how that all things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law

[1] *The Sixth Mansions*, chap. ix. p. 188.

of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me. Then opened he their mind, that they might understand the scriptures; and he said unto them, Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer, and rise again from the dead the third day' (Luke xxiv. 44–46). Which exactly the scriptures were which Jesus explained we may perhaps see in Peter's words on the day of Pentecost and other speeches in the Acts; the fact that Paul's speech at Antioch has much in common with those of Peter both in substance and in references to the Old Testament, particularly to Isaiah liii. for the sufferings of the Christ, and to Psalm xvi. for His resurrection, is evidence that there was a well-recognised tradition on such matters, to which indeed Paul could appeal in writing to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xv. 1–4), which explained that Christ both died for our sins and rose again 'according to the scriptures,' and doubtless specified which they were.

In three separate visions then we have seen that Moses and Elijah, the representatives of the Old Testament scriptures, have appeared as witnesses of Jesus and to the necessity of His passion, resurrection, and ascension. That Moses and Elijah are the two witnesses of Jesus is the basis of the prophecy of the two witnesses in the Apoca-

lypse, and in its application His death, resurrection, and ascension are re-enacted in His witnesses, just as they were prefigured in Moses and Elijah, the representatives of the Old Testament scriptures which likewise bear witness of Him. 'And I will give unto my two witnesses, and they shall prophesy . . . And if any man desireth to hurt them, fire proceedeth out of their mouth, and devoureth their enemies: and if any man shall desire to hurt them, in this manner must he be killed. These have the power to shut the heaven, that it rain not during the days of their prophecy (cf. Elijah, 2 Kings i. 10 *et seq.*; 1 Kings xvii. 1 *et seq.*): and they have power over the waters to turn them into blood, and to smite the earth with every plague, as often as they shall desire (cf. Moses, Exod. vii. 17 *et seq.*). And when they shall have finished their testimony, the beast . . . shall . . . overcome them and kill them. . . . And after the three days and a half the breath of life from God entered into them, and they stood upon their feet; . . . And they heard a great voice from heaven saying unto them, Come up hither. And they went up into heaven in the cloud; and their enemies beheld them' (Rev. xi. 3, 5–7, 11–12).

Unlike that of Luke, the narrative of

Mark does not make the nature of the vision of the women at the sepulchre at all clear, and if we had his account alone we should gather that the appearance was objective, not subjective. He does indeed use the word ecstasy in his description of its effects, but in such a way that it has generally, and not unnaturally, been supposed that his meaning is merely that the women were in a panic. 'And entering into the tomb, they saw a young man sitting on the right side, arrayed in a white robe; and they were amazed' (xvi. 5). As in Luke the phraseology appears to have been suggested by that of the visions of Daniel. 'Behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man . . . and when he came, I was amazed' (viii. 15, 17); 'And behold a man clothed in linen' (x. 5). The word used by Mark for 'amazed' is that found in the Septuagint. Mark's description, however, is that of an apparition rather than of a vision, comparable with the appearance of the angel to the wife of Manoah (Judges xiii. 3), which Josephus calls 'an apparition,' continuing 'it was an angel of God, and resembled a young man, beautiful and tall.'[1] We may compare it also

[1] *Antiquities*, bk. v. chap. viii. § 2, p. 119.

with the 'great apparition' which appeared to Heliodorus. 'Two other also appeared unto him, young men, . . . splendid in their apparel. . . . But as the high priest was making the propitiation, the same young men appeared again to Heliodorus, arrayed in the same garments' (2 Macc. iii. 24, 26, 33). To Matthew likewise the vision is objective, and the angel is not an angel seen in a vision, but the angel who rolled away the stone. 'His appearance was as lightning, and his raiment white as snow; and for fear of him the watchers did quake, and became as dead men' (xxviii. 3, 4). Like Luke and Mark he utilises the phraseology of Daniel, 'Behold a man clothed in linen, . . . his face as the appearance of lightning, . . . the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great quaking fell upon them . . . and there remained no strength in me' (x. 5–8). 'His raiment was white as snow' (vii. 9). In oral transmission the assimilation of the phraseology of one vision to that of another is quite natural. We notice that both Mark and Matthew mention only one angel, and from both gospels the idea of Moses and Elijah as witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus, representing the witness of the scriptures, has vanished.

CHAPTER VIII

THE MESSAGE OF THE ANGELS

What exactly was the message of the angels (or angel) at the sepulchre to the women? According to the most probable text of Luke the words were 'Why seek ye the living among the dead? Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee, saying that the Son of man must be delivered up into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again' (xxiv. 5–7). According to Mark they were 'Be not amazed: ye seek Jesus, the Nazarene, which hath been crucified: he is risen; he is not here: behold, the place were they laid him! But go, tell his disciples and Peter, He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you' (xvi. 6–7). At first sight, at any rate, the account in Luke seems much more probable, for the primary object of the appearance to the women was to

convey the news that Jesus was alive. To talk prosaically at such a moment of arrangements which had been made for a meeting in Galilee would be both incongruous and premature, and indeed quite pointless if, as Matthew tells us, and probably Mark in the original ending of the gospel, practically identical words were spoken by Jesus Himself in a much more likely connexion only a short time later. According to each gospel there is an appeal to a saying of Jesus, 'Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee' in Luke, and 'He goeth before you into Galilee: there shall ye see him, as he said unto you' in Mark. It is curious that the saying to which, according to Luke, the angels refer is not given in full in the present text of his gospel (ix. 43–44), and there is no mention of Galilee, though in the corresponding passage of Mark the reference is complete, so that on this point the tradition of Mark is preferable, being presupposed even in Luke. We read: 'And they went forth from thence, and passed through Galilee; and he would not that any man should know it. For he taught his disciples, and said unto them, The Son of man is delivered up into the hands of men, and they shall kill him; and

when he is killed, after three days he shall rise again' (Mark ix. 30–31). According to Mark the angel refers to words spoken by our Lord in the upper room the night before His passion, when the women were not present but only the twelve apostles (Luke xxii. 14; Mark xiv. 17), so that 'unto you' means not to the women as in Luke, but to the twelve. We read: 'And Jesus saith unto them, All ye shall be offended: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered abroad. Howbeit, after I am raised up, I will go before you into Galilee. But Peter said unto him, Although all shall be offended, yet will not I' (xiv. 27–29). We see the reason for the special mention of Peter in the angel's speech: it is part of the passage quoted. Though doubtless implied, it is not stated in so many words that they will see Him in Galilee, but it is in Matthew's account of the appearance of Jesus to the women. 'Then saith Jesus unto them, Fear not: go tell my brethren that they depart into Galilee, and there shall they see me' (xxviii. 10). Even if we suppose Mark's account of the message of the angel to be generally and in substance correct, the exact words given would seem to be a conflation

of what the angel actually said and the words of Jesus spoken later. It seems more probable, however, that Mark, or the oral tradition which he wrote down, confused the words of the angel with those of Jesus to the women, modifying the latter in the light of what He said the night before He suffered, and interpreting the angel's appeal to a former utterance of Jesus in that sense. Not infrequently we find similar confusion in Mark's narrative, presumably as the result of oral transmission. What according to Luke are details of our Lord's trial before the Sanhedrin he gives, most improbably, as part of the search for witnesses in the courtyard of the high priest's palace (Mark xiv. 57–64 ; cf. Luke xxii. 67–71). Similarly details of our Lord's trial before Herod he introduces into his account of the trial before Pilate (Mark xv. 3–5 ; cf. Luke xxiii. 9–10). A striking example of the confusion of similar sayings appears in each of the synoptic gospels, though in different degrees. On one occasion, when there had been a dispute among the apostles which of them should be greatest, Luke says 'He took a little child, and set him by his side, and said unto them, Whosoever shall receive this little child in my name, receiveth

me: and whosoever shall receive me receiveth him that sent me: for he that is least among you all, the same is great' (ix. 47–48). We notice that the first and last clauses have to do with an object lesson in humility, but the second with the receiving of a little child. Mark's account is practically the same, except that he omits the third part (ix. 36–37). On another occasion, when the disciples rebuked those who brought their babes to Jesus, Luke says 'But Jesus called them unto him, saying, Suffer the little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the kingdom of God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall not receive the kingdom of God as a little child, he shall in no wise enter therein' (xviii. 16–17). Mark's account is almost verbally identical (x. 14–15). Here we notice the first part has to do with the receiving of little children, and the second with humility as a necessity for entrance into the kingdom of God, the exact opposite of what we found in the former incident. The suggestion surely is that the second sections of the narratives have been interchanged, a very easy mistake to make with sayings verbally so very similar in the course of oral transmission. When we

read Matthew's version of the two incidents our supposition becomes a practical certainty. We read: 'And he called to him a little child, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye turn, and become as little children, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven. Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me' (xviii. 2–5). We notice that this account consists of part one of Luke's first incident, part two of his second, part three of his first, and part two of his first. There can be little doubt but that the tradition of Matthew is the most accurate version of what took place, and that of Mark the least, yet though the evangelist relies on another and better tradition for his second clause, the influence of Mark persists in the addition of his fourth clause, which in both Luke and Mark is placed in the wrong incident as the second section. Consequently in relating the second incident, having already used what should be the second clause, he gives only the first, 'But Jesus said, Suffer the little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of

such is the kingdom of heaven' (xix. 14). As in each of the synoptic gospels, and particularly in Mark, we find confusion of incidents and sayings, we need have little hesitation in deciding that the same is true in the case of Mark's account of the angel's speech to the women at the sepulchre, and that, as so often, Luke's is preferable. We notice now the point of Luke's repeated description of the women as those 'that followed with him from Galilee,' and 'which had come with him out of Galilee,' and see how it leads up to the words of the angels, 'Remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee.' Mark mentions that the women were those 'who, when he was in Galilee, followed him,' but the words in no way lead up to 'He goeth before you into Galilee,' so that in Mark's tradition the reason for the first statement according to Luke has vanished, and the connexion is lost.

If the latter part of the angel's speech is so inaccurately reported by Mark we may not unreasonably enquire whether the earlier part is more reliable. If, as we have concluded, we are dealing with a vision seen in ecstasy, the words 'he is not here: behold, the place where they laid him' are surely

impossible. Quite apart from the fact that during an ecstasy as a rule the senses cease to act, so that the women would be unable to examine the tomb, the revelations vouchsafed in the mystic state are of a supernatural order, and do not convey information which it would be quite easy to gain in ordinary ways. In form the words are evidently intended to refer us back to the previous statement that the two Maries 'beheld where he was laid' (xv. 47), and to give us more definite information. In substance they are merely the equivalent of Luke's 'Why seek ye the living among the dead?' interpreted in the light of the fact that they 'found not the body' of Jesus. The latter part of the angel's speech we have decided is a conflation of the message imparted to the women in ecstasy and of words spoken by our Lord on two separate occasions, one before He suffered and the other after His resurrection: it seems very probable that the first part has a similar composite origin, for besides reminiscences of the speech as given by Luke it contains echoes of phrases found in the third gospel in the story of the journey to Emmaus. 'Jesus, the Nazarene' is the description used by Cleopas and his companion.

'Which hath been crucified: he is risen' in substance reproduces 'be crucified, and the third day rise again' of Luke's version of the angels' words, but more exactly 'crucified him,' 'is risen indeed' of the Emmaus story, the word for 'is risen' being exactly the same in this case but quite different in the angels' speech. The fact that Mark misunderstood the nature of the vision vouchsafed to the women in ecstasy, and described it as though it were an apparition of an objective kind, is proof that his narrative is of a secondary character, the change being such as would naturally arise in the course of oral transmission, and makes it less difficult to believe that the speech attributed by Mark to the angel is, if our analysis is correct, a mosaic of words spoken at different times by different people, and so is not in any strict sense historical.

Matthew on the whole repeats Mark, but on several points, as we have noticed, he reverts to Luke. Jesus is not called 'the Nazarene,' and Peter is not mentioned separately. The words 'as he said' are rightly referred to the fact that Jesus had foretold His resurrection, not to a statement that they would see Him in Galilee, which had yet to be made, 'Lo, I have told you'

being substituted for 'as he said unto you' at this point.

Luke continues his narrative, 'And they remembered his words, and returned (from the tomb), and told all these things to the eleven, and to all the rest. Now they were Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James: and the other women with them told these things unto the apostles. And these words appeared in their sight as idle talk; and they disbelieved them'[1] (xxiv. 8–11). The language is rather involved, particularly where the names are introduced. What exactly did the writer mean? Fortunately we have another account of the message of the women in the discourse of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus. We read: 'Moreover certain women of our company amazed us, having been early at the tomb; and when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive. And certain of them that were with us went to the tomb, and found it even so as the women had

[1] The account of the visit of Peter to the tomb which follows in many manuscripts is absent from *Codex Bezae* and other Western authorities, and though early, it is probably not an original element of the gospel, and seems to be dependent on John.

said : but him they saw not ' (xxiv. 22–24). We notice at once what seems to be a contradiction in the two accounts. ' They disbelieved them.' ' They found it even so as the women had said.' The two disciples make a distinction between the statement that the women found not the body of Jesus, and their claim to have seen a vision of angels. One is mentioned as a fact fully accepted by the speakers, and only incidentally, in relating the doubtful story of the vision of angels, are we told that the first statement also was part of the information received from the women. Afterwards they explain why there could be no doubt about the emptiness of the tomb—the visit of ' certain of them that were with us ' had placed it beyond question. The words of the disciples might also be interpreted as implying that they proved the vision of angels to be true likewise, but probably this is regarded as being in another category—the truth about a vision of angels could not be proved by a visit to a spot where it is supposed to have taken place—and so still lacking confirmation. With regard to the women's report about the empty tomb it is clearly not true to say that at any time ' they disbelieved them,' though that this was

the case with regard to the vision of angels is implied in the disciples' story. Luke's words, however, are without qualification and seem to apply to the whole of the women's report—'They disbelieved them.' There is no suggestion that almost immediately a large part of their story was proved quite accurate. Even though the women's report had been that they had seen a vision of angels as well as that they had found the sepulchre empty, as the latter statement had been confirmed, to say that 'they disbelieved them' appears to be a very unfair summary of the attitude of the apostles and the rest towards them. Women who had been proved correct on so important a point as the emptiness of the tomb, in itself just as unlikely as the vision of angels, deserved to have any further statement they might make, however extraordinary, regarded as something better than 'idle talk,' and it is difficult to imagine that it could have been otherwise. The two disciples distinguished so clearly the different parts of the information derived from the women that we seem to be justified in supposing that compressed into the one statement there may be more reports than one, perhaps also of more than one group of women.

In confirmation of this idea it will be useful to consider Luke's manner of reporting speeches on other occasions, and particularly we may instance Paul's speech before Agrippa, describing his conversion and call. 'And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But arise, and stand upon thy feet: for to this end have I appeared unto thee, to appoint thee a minister and a witness both of the things wherein thou hast seen me, and of the things wherein I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom I send thee, to open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive remission of sins and an inheritance among them that are sanctified by faith in me. Wherefore, O king Agrippa, I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision' (Acts xxvi. 15–19). The substance of this speech we notice is derived from what Jesus said to him at his conversion, what Ananias said to him at Damascus, and what Jesus said to him in the vision in the temple (Acts xxii. 8, 15, 21), as also indeed from a prophecy of Isaiah (xlii. 6–7, 16). And yet he continues 'Wherefore . . . I was not disobedient unto the heavenly vision,' as

though he were reporting only one saying, and not giving with scriptural illustration a summary of three. If we may suppose, as is not unlikely in such a speech, a similar compression in the statement of the two disciples with regard to the report of the women, all contradiction between Luke's own narrative and what he gives as theirs, entirely disappears, for we may suppose that there were at least two reports, one about the emptiness of the tomb, and the other, perhaps by different women, delivering the message of the angels. If now we go back to the evangelist's own account we see that the idea is confirmed. We read: 'They . . . reported all these things to the eleven,' 'the other women with them told these things unto the apostles,' 'These words appeared . . . as idle talk.' We notice the emphasis on 'these'—'all these things,' 'these things,' 'these words.' The reference can hardly be different on each occasion, and it would seem to be primarily to the report of the words of the angels bringing to remembrance our Lord's own words, the last thing mentioned, rather than to any statement about the emptiness of the tomb, though of necessity the latter would be included or implied. If so, we can under-

stand better the awkward verse in the middle of Luke's account. 'Now they were Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James: and the other women with them told these things unto the apostles.' Clearly the evangelist would have us understand that the three women named were among those who visited the sepulchre, but it is rather curious that he tells us nothing else about them, and proceeds to say that not they but the other women told 'these things' unto the apostles. It seems not improbable that Luke is here curtailing his source, or that he has other information than he gives. In the statement that the other women reported 'these things' there is perhaps a suggestion that there was also a report of Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and the other Mary which in some way differed, and so possibly did not include the angels' words to which primarily he is referring, but only that the tomb was empty.

CHAPTER IX

ST. MARK'S STORY OF THE ECSTASY AT THE TOMB

THE words of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus conclude with the statement with regard to those who visited the sepulchre after the tidings of the women, 'but him they saw not.' Taken in conjunction with the words which immediately precede, 'even so as the women had said,' these words seem to suggest that there was also a report that certain of the women had actually seen Jesus, and, if so, in the speech attributed to Cleopas there would be a combination of the substance of three reports, quite in Luke's manner, as we have seen in his account of Paul's speech before Agrippa, where also three sayings appear as one. Certainly the words are not directly suggested by the statement of the angels that He was alive, for it does not follow that because He was alive they should expect to see Him

immediately and at the tomb. If there was such a report, that some of the women had seen Jesus, it could only have been made by Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and the other Mary. All this is, of course, merely hypothesis, but it seems the most obvious way of filling out Luke's account, which is plainly incomplete, and it fits in in an extraordinary manner with what we are told elsewhere both in Mark and John.

Mark tells us that Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome came to the sepulchre in the early morning, no mention being made of other women. After giving his version of the message of the angel to the women in the tomb he continues: 'And they went out, and fled from the tomb; for trembling and an ecstasy held them: and they said nothing to anyone; for they were afraid' (xvi. 8); and there the gospel ends abruptly. Mark's account, as we have already noticed, seems quite to fail to make the nature of the vision clear, and he confuses the subjective with the objective, so that we might imagine that he was describing an exterior apparition. Fear, trembling, and flight, however, are quite the usual accompaniments of a vision seen in ecstasy. In the descriptions of Daniel's

visions we read: 'And, behold, there stood before me as the appearance of a man . . . and when he came, I was affrighted, and fell upon my face (viii. 15, 17). 'And I Daniel alone saw the vision: for the men that were with me saw not the vision; but a great trembling fell upon them, and they fled to hide themselves' (x. 7). Unless, however, the vision is in itself of an alarming character, such experiences belong only to the earlier stages, where indeed Mark does say that 'they were amazed': afterwards they are succeeded, as St. Teresa says, by an inexpressible peace and joy and a disposition to praise God.[1] The good news that Jesus had risen and was alive ought not to have left them in a state of fright that they could say nothing to anyone. It is all so contrary to what Luke says, and yet it is difficult to suppose that the difference is to be ascribed to the imagination of the evangelist, or to a misunderstanding. The probability is that Mary Magdalene and her two companions, though, doubtless, like the other women they saw the two angels and were in an ecstasy, were conscious of no message at all. As at the transfiguration the effect upon Peter was somewhat different

[1] *The Sixth Mansions*, chap. iii. pp. 140–1.

from that upon the other two apostles, and the suggestion to build tabernacles was his alone, so here too the effect of the vision upon Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and the other Mary would appear to have been quite unlike that upon the other women. Indeed, owing to difference in temperament and predispositions, quite a different type of ecstasy resulted. Again St. Teresa seems to help us to understand it by her description of the condition of one, whom indeed she likens to Mary Magdalene, who having experienced the delight of union with her Lord mourns and weeps continually in her love and ardent desire, thinking only of the torment of His absence. 'She seems to feel herself to be in a strange solitude: all those who live on earth are no company for her: no, nor would . . . those in heaven be, if her Beloved One were not there present; everything torments her, and she sees herself like one hanging in the air, neither able to rest on anything belonging to earth, nor able to ascend into heaven.' 'It happens then sometimes that such a soul thus burning in herself, upon a very slight thought that she may have . . . feels . . . a blow, as if it came from a fiery dart, though she understands not whence, nor how.' 'The soul

sees herself absent from God: and His Majesty helps this at that time by so clear a manifestation of Himself, as to increase the pain.' 'In an instant it binds up the faculties in such a manner, that they have no liberty for anything whatever, except for those things which tend to increase this grief.' 'In this extremity she does not continue long—at most . . . not above three or four hours. . . . Sometimes it has not continued for more than a quarter of an hour, and yet the person has been as it were disjointed.' 'The body is so disjointed that, for two or three days after, it has no strength even to write a few lines, for the pains are great.' 'Then she fears indeed, . . . nor is it possible for this pain to be removed, till our Lord shall take it away. This is usually done by a vision, whereby the true Comforter both comforts and strengthens the soul.'[1] The description seems to fit the case of Mary Magdalene almost exactly. She had experienced the closest communion with her Lord as she followed Him, but her bliss had been cruelly broken. We think of her mourning by the cross, and afterwards by the sepulchre. To her, and so probably to

[1] *The Sixth Mansions*, chap. xi. pp. 200, 198, 199, 198, 201, 199, 202.

her companions likewise, the angelic vision was exactly such a manifestation of the supernatural as would increase her grief, but would convey no message at all. The vision 'binds up the faculties,' says St. Teresa. 'Trembling and an ecstasy held them,' says St. Mark. 'They have no liberty for anything whatever,' 'Then she fears indeed,' says St. Teresa. 'They said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid,' says St. Mark. The effect of the vision was very different from what it was upon the other women from Galilee, as Luke describes it: in one case it led to an ecstasy of joy and in the other to an ecstasy of sorrow. Upon these other women the effect was much more transitory. To terror succeeded peace, and they were able to grasp the angels' message; they remembered our Lord's words, and returning told all things to the apostles and the rest. Mark's account thus fits in exactly with Luke's, and gives meaning to a difficult verse. 'Now they were Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James: and the other women with them told these things unto the apostles' (Luke xxiv. 10).

Matthew, as so often, combines the narratives of Mark and Luke, though properly,

as we have seen reason to suppose, they refer to the widely differing experiences of different groups of women, and making of the two one story refers it to Mary Magdalene and the other Mary. We read: 'And they departed quickly from the tomb with fear and great joy, and ran to bring his disciples word' (xxviii. 8). He then continues with an incident which there is every reason to believe historical. 'And behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and took hold of his feet, and worshipped him. Then saith Jesus unto them, Fear not: go tell my brethren that they depart into Galilee, and there shall they see me' (xxviii. 9–10). Matthew's narrative, as we have noticed so frequently, is to a large extent a fusion of the accounts of Mark and Luke, and as this incident is not in Luke, though there is a suggestion of it, and it differs entirely from the type of story peculiar to the first gospel, it seems not improbable that it was derived from the lost ending of Mark. This indeed agrees with a conclusion we have already reached, that it is the speech of the angels as given in Luke which is authentic, not the speech which takes its place in Mark, in which not only are our Lord's words and those of the

angels confused, but words are attributed to him in the past which had yet to be spoken in the future. If so, the appearance to the women must be part of the original tradition. St. Teresa, we remember, declared that a vision was usually necessary to remove the effects of an ecstasy of grief. The appearance of Jesus to them was thus exactly at the right psychological moment.

CHAPTER X

ST. JOHN'S STORY OF MARY AT THE TOMB

Our conclusions agree exactly with what we are told in the fourth gospel. 'Now on the first day of the week cometh Mary Magdalene early, while it was yet dark, unto the tomb, and seeth the stone taken away from the tomb' (xx. 1). The note of time, we notice, agrees with what we read in Luke and Matthew, but not in Mark. 'She runneth therefore, and cometh to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and saith unto them, They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we know not where they have laid him' (xx. 2). Her words to the apostles, 'we know not,' suggest that she had been accompanied by other women to the sepulchre, as the other evangelists state, and probably some of them returned with her. There is no reason to suppose that

Mary hurried from the tomb as soon as she saw the stone taken away. The more natural thing would be that she would look more closely into the matter. Her words to the apostles seem rather to suggest that, as Luke says, the women entered into the sepulchre, and found it empty, 'They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb.' The next section is an elaboration of the statement of the two disciples on the way to Emmaus, 'And certain of them that were with us went to the tomb, and found it even so as the women had said' (Luke xxiv. 24). We read: 'Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they went toward the tomb. And they ran both together: and the other disciple outran Peter, and came first to the tomb; and stooping and looking in, he seeth the linen cloths lying; yet entered he not in. Simon Peter therefore also cometh, following him, and entered into the tomb; and he beholdeth the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, that was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself. Then entered in therefore the other disciple also, which came first to the tomb, and he saw, and believed. For as yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again

from the dead. So the disciples went away again unto their own home' (xx. 3–10). In the fact that John had to stoop to look into the sepulchre we find confirmation of our conclusion that the stone could not have been so very great, and so not beyond the powers of three women to move, agreeing with what must have been their own opinion when they set out for the sepulchre, according to the natural interpretation of Luke apart from the other gospels. The tomb was apparently of only one chamber, the place for the body being clearly seen from the entrance, either of the bench or loculus type, not a tomb with *kokim*, which would have allowed nothing but the lower part of the body to be visible, and would have made it quite impossible for Peter even after entering the tomb to have seen 'the linen cloths lying, and the napkin, that was upon his head, not lying with the linen cloths, but rolled up in a place by itself' (xx. 7). John evidently wishes us to note the contrast between the resurrection of Jesus, and what he says about the raising of Lazarus. 'He that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes; and his face was bound about with a napkin' (xi. 44). The statement that John 'saw and believed' can

mean no more than what the two disciples on the way to Emmaus said, that those who went to the sepulchre 'found it even so as the women had said,' not that they believed that He was risen from the dead, for the verse which follows seems distinctly to tell us it was not so, 'As yet they knew not the scripture, that he must rise again from the dead' (xx. 9). Mary Magdalene, and probably other women also, followed the apostles back again to the tomb, remaining there even when the apostles went away again home. John describes the vision of angels from the point of view of Mary Magdalene. 'But Mary was standing without at the tomb weeping: so, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; and she beholdeth two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him' (xx. 11–13). By itself the description would not perhaps suggest an ecstatic vision, but there is nothing, as there is in Mark's account, which is incompatible with such a view. According to Luke the women were in perplexity, according to John Mary

lingered at the tomb weeping. We are reminded of St. Teresa's description of the woman who 'mourns and weeps continually' in yearning for her Lord. As she weeps Mary is in an ecstasy, and her ordinary experience seems to be continued in the vision. 'So, as she wept, she stooped and looked into the tomb; and she beholdeth two angels in white sitting, one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain' (xx. 11–12). As is usual in such experiences the vision no doubt reproduces the reality, so that the sepulchre must have been one with a bench for bodies along one or more sides, not with a loculus cut in the wall. The vision of the angels in John's account is often described as purposeless, and, if what John describes were all, it might be difficult to see a motive, but, as so often, his intention seems to have been to draw attention to matters which the other evangelists have omitted. The conversation between Mary and the angels which he records would form an excellent introduction to the words given by Luke, 'Woman, why weepest thou?' 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.' 'Why seek ye the living among the dead?' Yet if our conclusion is correct

Mary Magdalene quite failed to grasp the latter part of the conversation, and, as at the transfiguration, in different people the vision roused different emotions. One thought only was dominant in the mind of Mary Magdalene, 'They have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him,' and the vision of the angels availed nothing to assuage her grief and sense of loss. Mark, as we have seen, goes further and says of both Mary and her companions, 'Trembling and an ecstasy held them, and they said nothing to any one,' but John, who has avoided any direct mention of the ecstasy, says nothing of this. Lapse of time is hardly measurable in the mystic state, and however long it lasts it may seem little more than momentary. To Mary it was when she had finished speaking with the angel, really, we may suppose, when she came to herself after the ecstasy, that she turned and saw Jesus. 'When she had thus said, she turned herself back, and beholdeth Jesus standing, and knew not that it was Jesus. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? whom seekest thou? She, supposing him to be the gardener, saith unto him, Sir, if thou hast borne him hence, tell me where thou hast

laid him, and I will take him away. Jesus saith unto her, Mary. She turneth herself, and saith unto him in Hebrew, Rabboni; which is to say, Master' (xx. 14–16). Matthew has combined in one narrative the return of the women who reported the angel's words to the apostles and that of Mary Magdalene and her two companions, and he says: 'And behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail.' It is the sound of her name, 'Mary,' which rouses her to her true self, and recognising Jesus the bonds of the ecstasy are broken. 'And they came and took hold of his feet, and worshipped him,' says Matthew, and it explains the next words of John, 'Jesus saith to her, Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father' (xx. 17). Like Matthew, John also gives a message to the brethren. 'But go unto my brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God' (xx. 17). The message seems supplementary to that of Matthew, not contradictory. Usually in literary problems it is unsafe to combine divergent narratives, but this is not always true in dealing with the fourth gospel, and in the present instance a combination of the two traditions makes better sense than

either alone. 'Go tell my brethren that they depart into Galilee, and there shall they see me.' 'I ascend unto my Father and your Father, and my God and your God.' The appearance in Galilee, which Jesus had foretold the night before He suffered, we see to be intended as the great manifestation of Jesus in His glory before His ascension and the withdrawal of His visible presence. John then continues, 'Mary Magdalene cometh and telleth the disciples, I have seen the Lord; and how that he had said these things unto her' (xx. 18). It is of this report, 'I have seen the Lord,' that we seem to find an echo in the words of the disciples on the way to Emmaus, 'But him they saw not,' a conclusion which agrees exactly with what we judged probable on other grounds.

CHAPTER XI

THE APPEARANCE OF OUR LORD IN GALILEE

THERE is no need for a detailed discussion of the journey to Emmaus or of the appearance in the upper room on the evening of the first Easter Day, recorded by both Luke and John, or of the appearance to Thomas also a week later, recorded only by John. In the appendix to the fourth gospel there is an appearance in Galilee, intended presumably as a preliminary to His great manifestation there. 'After these things Jesus manifested himself again to the disciples at the sea of Tiberias; . . . This is now the third time that Jesus was manifested to the disciples, after that he was risen from the dead' (xxi. 1, 14). At the moment they were not expecting to see Jesus, but true to His promise He had gone before them into Galilee (Mark xiv. 28). In Matthew alone now do we find an account

of that appearance in Galilee, which to Jesus Himself was evidently of such great importance, which He foretold the night before His crucifixion, and of which He spoke to Mary Magdalene and the other women on the first Easter morning, though it must presumably have been recorded in the ending of Mark now lost. Probably, however, it is of this that St. Paul speaks when writing to the Corinthians, 'Then he appeared to above five hundred brethren at once' (1 Cor. xv. 6). Such a gathering could hardly have taken place conveniently or safely elsewhere than in Galilee—at Jerusalem indeed even at a later period we read of only a hundred and twenty (Acts i. 15)—and except by prearrangement for some important object, which our Lord's promise that He would see them in Galilee provides, such an assembly of disciples would have no purpose at all. Matthew says: 'But the eleven disciples went into Galilee, unto the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came to them and spake unto them, saying, All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth. Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing

them into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world' (xxviii. 16–20).

For a Jew this must have been the climax of the gospel story, for Jesus is manifest as the Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man. The announcement at His baptism, 'Thou art my Son, the beloved, in thee I am well pleased,' is declared to have received fulfilment, 'All authority hath been given unto me in heaven and on earth.' We are reminded of the temptation of the devil at the beginning of His ministry when first He was proclaimed the Son of God. Showing Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time he said, 'To thee will I give all this authority, and the glory of them: for it hath been delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it' (Luke iv. 5–6). Our Lord's choice on that occasion is seen to be vindicated, for He has received not merely authority over the kingdoms of this world, but all authority in heaven and on earth. Having recorded the manifestation of Jesus as the Christ, Matthew finishes his gospel, as not improbably Mark had done before him. 'The mountain where Jesus

had appointed them' is mentioned in both Luke and Mark, but not in Matthew, who has disarranged his material. Luke says: 'He went out into the mountain to pray; and he continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called his disciples: and he chose from them twelve, whom also he named apostles' (vi. 12–13). Mark says: 'And he goeth up into the mountain, and calleth unto him whom he himself would: and they went unto him. And he appointed twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach' (iii. 13–14). There can be little doubt but that this is the mountain which Matthew has in mind as the scene of the appearance in Galilee, and not simply some other mountain which Jesus appointed for the purpose. The connexion between the two scenes on the mountain is lost in Matthew, because through rearrangement of his sources, necessitated by the plan he has adopted for his gospel, all the emphasis is put upon the sermon preached on the mountain (v. 1), while the other fact, which Luke makes plain, that it was upon the same mountain—and really on the mountain and not practically at the bottom of it, as seems to have been the case with the sermon (Luke vi. 17)—that immediately

before the apostles had been chosen. In the original tradition we can hardly doubt both scenes on the mountain must have been recorded, and presumably in Mark, or the mention of 'the mountain where Jesus had appointed them' by Matthew would seem to be inexplicable. We have then beyond reasonable question two incidents which must have been recorded in the lost ending of Mark, the appearance to Mary Magdalene and her companions on Easter morning, when the manifestation in Galilee was for the second time foretold (cf. Mark xiv. 28, Matt. xxvi. 32), and the climax 'of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God' (Mark i. 1) in the appearance on the mountain of the Son of Man in His resurrection glory and fullness of divine authority.

Speaking to Mary our Lord had said that His ascension would be the beginning of a new type of friendship, 'Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father' (John xx. 17). The combination of our Lord's words to the women (Matt. xxviii. 10) and to Mary Magdalene (John xx. 17) on Easter morning, which we decided was allowable, suggests that the appearance in Galilee was but a preliminary to the ascension, and the pledge of the reality of this new and spiritual intimacy between Him and

His disciples, 'Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world.' With this assurance of the perpetual presence of the glorified Jesus Matthew closes his gospel, nothing more being necessary for the completion of his scheme. Luke adds an account of our Lord's final departure from His disciples. In Acts he describes it much more fully in language suggested by the assumption of Elijah and the passing of Moses as an ascension, the disciples gazing upon Him in an ecstasy as He is taken up to heaven, while Moses and Elijah themselves, the representatives of the scriptures of the Old Covenant, appear in glory, as at the transfiguration and by the sepulchre, to bear Him witness.

Our investigation has brought out many points which are usually regarded as obscure in the gospel story. It seems to be proved beyond reasonable doubt that Luke is the most original and reliable of the synoptic gospels, and that it is quite inconceivable that Mark is the basis of the other two and the primary authority for the original evangelical tradition. Frequently he has misunderstood his source, and where he elaborates the earlier narrative of Luke he is not seldom inaccurate, and it is plain that very often his alterations are due, not to the posses-

sion of additional information, whether from St. Peter or elsewhere, but to a desire to bring out more clearly what he believes to be the meaning of the story. John, on the other hand, is much more reliable, and his narrative not only fits in with, but frequently elucidates, what we are told by Luke. In view of its undoubtedly late date no stronger evidence of its apostolic origin is conceivable.

We have seen too that from the time of His baptism the dominant idea in our Lord's life was the consciousness that He was the Christ, both Son of God and Son of man. The words attributed to John the Baptist hailing Him as the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world are no anachronism on the part of the fourth evangelist, but express our Lord's own conviction that, as the Servant of Jehovah, He had come into the world to save sinners: in St. Paul's words, to die for our sins, in His own, to give His life a ransom for many.

With regard to the resurrection our investigation has done nothing to discredit the story of the empty tomb. We may say, indeed, that the development of the narrative which we have traced from Luke to Mark and from Mark to Matthew, the original story after many years being confirmed on many points by that of John,

would be quite inexplicable on any other hypothesis than that of its truth. We have seen what an important place ecstatic visions take in the development of the gospel story, in connexion with the resurrection and ascension, but also at other times of crisis, in the history of the early Church, as well as in the narratives of our Lord's birth and ministry. The appearances of our Lord after His resurrection are seen to be of a quite different order and very clearly distinguished from visions of angels, the former being objective, the latter subjective. Legendary accretion, which has undoubtedly been at work, cannot explain the fundamental facts, and no explanation is conceivable except on the assumption of their substantial accuracy. Our criticism has shown the improbability of certain of the details in later versions of the Easter story, but it is hoped that it has done something at any rate to vindicate the essential truth of the traditional faith of the Church with regard to the resurrection of her Lord.

Per Baptismum tuum,
Per Crucem et Passionem tuam,
Per gloriosam Resurrectionem tuam,
Per admirabilem Ascensionem tuam,
Libera nos, Domine.

THE NARRATIVES OF THE VIRGIN BIRTH

Veni, redemptor gentium ;
  Ostende partum virginis ;
Miretur omne saeculum,
  Talis decet partus Deo.

Non ex virili semine,
  Sed mystico spiramine,
Verbum Dei factum est caro,
  Fructusque ventris floruit.

Alvus tumescit virginis,
  Claustrum pudoris permanet ;
Vexilla virtutum micant,
  Versatur in templo Deus.

CHAPTER I

ST. LUKE'S ACCOUNT

FEW, if any, of those who refuse to credit the narratives of our Lord's resurrection accept as historical the accounts of His virgin birth. It will be well, therefore, to give a similar critical investigation of the stories given by the evangelists describing the manner of His birth. According to our contention that Luke preserves the earliest evangelical tradition we should expect to find the primary account in the third gospel, but quite apart from this it will be generally admitted that Luke's account on the whole is more likely to be authentic than Matthew's. Luke prefaces the story of our Lord's birth by a similar story of the birth of John the Baptist, and it will be impossible for us to consider one apart from the other. In both cases, as we have noticed, the announcement of the birth is made during an ecstatic vision. Such visions, whether recorded in scripture

or elsewhere, very commonly take place during prayer, and this was the case at our Lord's baptism, at the transfiguration, with Cornelius, with Peter on the housetop, and with Paul in the temple. We are not actually told that Zacharias was praying at the time of his vision, but the words of the angel suggest it, 'Thy supplication is heard' (i. 13), and certainly it was a time of prayer, for we are told 'the whole multitude of the people were praying' (i. 10), and Zacharias himself was offering incense, which is a type of prayer. The vision was that of an angel, and so comparable with that vouchsafed to Mary, the shepherds, the women at the sepulchre, and Cornelius, and indeed others where the word angel is not found. The angel is said to have 'appeared' to Zacharias, this word being used also at the transfiguration, at Pentecost, and at the conversion of St. Paul. The angel is said to be the 'angel of the Lord,' the usual Old Testament expression to describe a manifestation of God in personal form, being employed also by Luke of the appearance to the shepherds, of the deliverance of the apostles from prison (Acts v. 19), of the message to Philip (viii. 26), of the deliverance

of Peter (xii. 7), and the stroke of Herod (xii. 23). It is found also four times in the birth stories given by Matthew (i. 20, 24; ii. 13, 19). The angel appeared 'standing.' The same verb—or compounds of it—is employed in the stories of the shepherds, of the transfiguration, of the women at the sepulchre, of the ascension, and of the supposed vision of Peter (Acts xii. 7). The angel was seen on the 'right' side of the altar of incense. Mention of the 'right' side or hand is common in descriptions of visions, both in scripture and elsewhere.[1] To Stephen our Lord appeared on the right hand of God, and according to Mark the angel in the sepulchre is seated on the 'right' side, while in the vision of Zechariah Satan stands at the 'right' hand of Joshua (Zech. iii. 1). Zacharias was 'troubled' at the vision, the same being said also of Mary and of the women at the sepulchre. 'Fear' also fell upon him, the same effect being produced upon Mary, the shepherds, the apostles at the transfiguration, the women at the sepulchre, and Cornelius. Zacharias is bidden, 'Fear not,' the same injunction being given in the visions of Mary, the

[1] See pp. 46–7.

shepherds, and St. Paul, both at Corinth and on the ship, and according to Matthew to the women at the tomb. The appearance is called a 'vision,' the description given to that of the two angels at the sepulchre, of Jesus to St. Paul at his conversion, and of the angel to Cornelius. The ecstatic phraseology of the account of the announcement of the birth of John the Baptist to Zacharias is thus very prominent, and the place of the vision in the Gospel scheme of ecstatic visions is plain.

In the account of the vision of Mary in which the birth of Jesus was announced the characteristic phraseology is not nearly so abundant, though it is sufficiently apparent. Again, as to Zacharias, we have the appearance of an angel. Like him she was greatly 'troubled,' and like him afraid. To her as to Zacharias the angel says 'Fear not.' Mention of the ecstatic details does not exhaust the similarity of the two accounts. In outline and to a large extent in phraseology the narratives are identical, and they were evidently drawn up on the same model. A comparison of the two in parallel columns is most illuminating.

MARY

St. Luke i. 26–38.

26–7 Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, to [a virgin]
a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David ;

and the virgin's name was Mary.

28 And he came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee.

29 But she was greatly troubled at the saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this might be.

30 And the angel said unto her,
Fear not, Mary : for thou hast found favour with God.

31 And behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son,
and shalt call his name Jesus.

32 He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Most High :

ZACHARIAS

St. Luke i. 5–23.

[19 And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God ; and I was sent to speak unto thee.]

5 There was in the days of Herod, king of Judæa, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abijah : and he had a wife of the daughters of Aaron,
and her name was Elisabeth. . . .

11 And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.

12 And Zacharias was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell upon him.

13 But the angel said unto him,
Fear not, Zacharias : because thy supplication is heard,
and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son,

and thou shalt call his name John. . . .

15–16 For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink ;

Mary	Zacharias
and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David :	and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb. And many of the children of Israel shall he turn unto the Lord their God.
33 And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever ; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.	17 And he shall go before his face in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to walk in the wisdom of the just ; to make ready for the Lord a people prepared for him.
34 And Mary said unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man ?	18 And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this ? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.
35 And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee : wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God.	19 And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God ; and I was sent to speak unto thee, and to bring thee these good tidings.
36 And behold, Elisabeth thy kinswoman, she also hath conceived a son in her old age : and this is the sixth month with her that was called barren.	20 And behold, thou shalt be silent and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall come to pass,
37–8 For no word from God shall be void of power.	because thou believedst not my words, which shall be

MARY	ZACHARIAS
And Mary said, Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word.	fulfilled in their season. . . .
And the angel departed from her.	23 And . . . he departed unto his house.

The comparison shows that practically every detail in the account of the vision of Mary is paralleled in that of the vision of Zacharias. Whether in word or general outline the agreement between two different narratives could scarcely be closer. The primary authority for the virgin birth is to be found in *vv.* 34–35, and very frequently we are told, by a large number of writers, that these words—or sometimes only the latter part of *v.* 34, 'seeing I know not a man'—are interpolated.[1] The parallel columns make it quite plain that neither suggestion is possible. The statement with regard to the virgin birth stands or falls with the rest of the story, and it is clearly an essential element of Luke's narrative. It is as necessary for the parallelism, which we cannot suppose was left for an interpolator to complete, as any other of the details of the narrative, while the phraseology, we note,

[1] For lists of authorities see Moffatt, *Introduction to the Literature of the New Testament*, pp. 268–9.

is quite Lucan. The authority for the story as recorded in the third gospel ultimately must have been the mother of our Lord, for much of the information no one else could possibly have supplied. Much of Luke's material, however, seems to have been derived from the apostle St. John,[1] and among passages traceable to this source the birth narratives would seem to be included. In view of the statement in the fourth gospel—'from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home' (xix. 27)—no more likely authority could well be imagined.

[1] See 'The Origin of the Gospels,' *C.Q.R.*, July, 1922.

CHAPTER II

ST. MATTHEW'S ACCOUNT

THE virgin birth is also recorded in Matthew in a passage peculiar to that gospel. In phraseology, however, there is considerable agreement with what we find in Luke. It will be useful to set out the whole narrative as given in the first gospel, putting into parallel columns the phrases of Luke which correspond.

MATTHEW i.	LUKE i. and ii.
18 Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise :	ii. 11 There is born . . . a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.
When his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.	i. 27 To a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph.
	ii. 4–5 Joseph . . . with Mary, who was betrothed to him, being great with child.
	i. 31, 35 Thou shalt conceive in thy womb . . . The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee.

Matthew i.	Luke i. and ii.
19 And Joseph her husband, being a righteous man,	i. 6 They were both righteous before God. ii. 25 This man was righteous and devout.
and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.	[Deut. xxiv. 1.] [Matt. v. 32; xix. 9.]
20 But when he thought on these things,	ii. 19 But Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart.
behold, an angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream,	i. 11 There appeared unto him an angel of the Lord. [Matt. i. 20; ii. 12, 13, 19, 22; xxvii. 19.]
saying, Joseph, thou son of David,	i. 27 Joseph, of the house of David. ii. 4 Joseph . . . of the house and family of David.
fear not	i. 13 Fear not, Zacharias. i. 30 Fear not, Mary.
to take unto thee Mary thy wife:	ii. 4–5 Joseph also went up . . . to enrol himself with Mary, who was betrothed to him.
for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.	i. 31, 35 Thou shalt conceive in thy womb. . . . The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee . . . wherefore also that which is to be born shall be called holy.
21 And she shall bring forth a son;	i. 31 And behold, thou shalt . . . bring forth a son.
and thou shalt call his name Jesus;	i. 31 And behold, thou . . . shalt call his name Jesus.
for it is he that shall save his people from their sins.	[Acts iv. 12; v. 31; xiii. 23–24, 38.]

Matthew i.	Luke i. and ii.
22 Now all this is come to pass, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying,	[Matt. i. 22; ii. 15, 17, 23; iv. 14; viii. 17; xii. 17; xiii. 35; xxi. 4; xxvii. 9.]
23 Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel; which is, being interpreted, God with us.	[Is. vii. 14.]
24 And Joseph arose from his sleep, and did as the angel of the Lord commanded him,	ii. 9, 15 And an angel of the Lord stood by them. . . . And it came to pass, when the angels went away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go . . . and see this thing . . . which the Lord hath made known unto us.
and took unto him his wife;	ii. 4–5 And Joseph also went up . . . to enrol himself with Mary, who was betrothed to him.
25 And knew her not till she had brought forth a son:	ii. 7 And she brought forth her first-born son.
and he called his name Jesus.	ii. 21 And . . . his name was called Jesus.

A study of the parallel columns makes it plain that in ideas and phraseology the narratives of Matthew and Luke have much in common, and can scarcely be independent. If we examine the Greek we find an even more

striking similarity, for in various places we see the words and phrases of Luke repeated in Matthew with no alteration.

Matthew's narrative, whatever its source, leads up to the first of the ten special prophecies which the evangelist quotes as being fulfilled in the life of our Lord. The peculiarity of these ten prophecies often pointed out, is that the translation frequently disagrees with what we find in the Septuagint, and apparently they are taken, not directly from the scriptures, but from a collection of Old Testament testimonies intended to illustrate the life of our Lord, which, being drawn up in Hebrew, or more probably in Aramaic, was translated into Greek apparently by the evangelist himself, so far as he used it. One of the passages, 'that he should be called a Nazarene,' has no counterpart in the Old Testament unless, as the appeal is to 'prophets,' not to a prophet, the reference is to the various prophecies of the Branch (Aram. nāṣûrā; Heb. nēṣer; Is. xi. 1; Jer. xxiii. 5, xxxiii. 15; Zech. iii. 8, vi. 12). Another prophecy illustrating the triumphant entry, is really a combination of words from Isaiah (lxii. 11) and Zechariah (ix. 9). Also the prophecy with regard to the thirty pieces of silver,

which we are told is taken from Jeremiah, as a matter of fact appears to be based chiefly on Zechariah (xi. 12–13), though perhaps also on Jeremiah xxxii. 6–15, with reminiscences of Jeremiah xviii. 1–6, xix. 11). The evangelist seems to be using a set of Old Testament oracles which had come to him orally, not in writing, the inaccuracies and conflation of different texts being exactly such as we should expect in the course of oral transmission. Of the apostle Matthew Papias tells us, according to Eusebius, 'So then Matthew compiled the oracles in the Hebrew language, and each one interpreted them as he was able.'[1] It seems not unreasonable to identify this collection of *Logia* compiled by the apostle with that used by the evangelist in the gospel which bears Matthew's name. The prophecy of Micah (v. 2), that Christ should be born at Bethlehem, which is quoted by the chief priests and scribes to Herod, evidently belongs to the same set, the Greek differing widely from that of the Septuagint. As it appears without the introductory formula which is found before each of the ten prophecies, it suggests that, as in so many other cases in the gospel, the emphasis on the ten words is due to the

[1] *Hist. Eccl.* iii. 39; P.G. xx. col. 300.

evangelist, and is to be explained as part of the numerical scheme according to which the book was written, threes, fives, sevens, tens, and fourteens abounding. There seems to be no reason to suppose that the evangelist utilised all the testimonies contained in the collection, but only such as served his purpose. If, as seems plain, the narrative which leads up to the prophecy of Isaiah with regard to the virgin who should conceive, is dependent on Luke, the writer is evidently to be distinguished from the compiler of the prophecies, in Hebrew or Aramaic, which is exactly in accord with what Papias says, the former in all probability being the evangelist himself. Apart from a tradition of the virgin birth we can hardly imagine that the words of Isaiah vii. 14 would ever have been quoted as illustrating the life of Jesus. At any rate the fact that the Hebrew word would be more correctly translated 'young woman,' or 'maiden,' may be regarded as evidence that it cannot have been the prophecy which suggested the doctrine and story, as is sometimes declared, particularly as the earlier narrative in Luke says nothing of the prophecy.

If we consider the ten prophecies we find that five of them are inserted as proofs from

scripture of details recorded in Mark, and the prophecy is added to the narrative of the source without any introductory matter, again suggesting that the incidents which the testimonies were intended to illustrate were supposed to be well known, and that there was no accompanying narrative in the source from which they were taken. What is true of these five prophecies is probably true of all the ten, and, if so, presumably of all the extracts from the Old Testament assembled in the evangelist's source. All the evidence is thus against the idea that it was from this source, which apparently in itself was a bare collection of texts with no explanatory matter, that the evangelist gained his primary knowledge of the events they were regarded as illustrating. To a person with no previous information of these incidents indeed they would be for the most part quite unintelligible. Yet it can scarcely be denied that in several cases the prophecy has modified the story. We read, for example, of two animals, an ass and a colt, in the Palm Sunday procession, suggested clearly by the words of Zechariah (ix. 9), though by a misunderstanding of the poetic form, in which the ass is the colt. Similarly in the account of the treachery of Judas we

read of 'thirty pieces of silver' where the other synoptic gospels speak simply of 'money,' the change again being evidently due to the prophecy of Zechariah (xi. 13). In the story of Judas' repentance we are told that he brought back the thirty pieces of silver, and the chief priests and elders took them, that it was they who bought the field, and that the field was the potter's field, whereas Luke says that Judas himself bought the field (Acts i. 18), and makes no mention of the potter, the modifications almost certainly being traceable to the words of the prophet (or prophets). It is not improbable that the writer of the first gospel was acquainted with the tradition with regard to Judas incorporated in the first chapter of the Acts, but even so he must have had other information, for the statement that the field was 'to bury strangers in,' which can hardly have been invented, is suggested by nothing in Acts or Zechariah. The probability would seem to be that in every instance the evangelist had other knowledge of the incidents illustrated than any which could be derived from the prophecies themselves, and that in no case is it likely that the nucleus of the story, apart from details, is an invention on the basis of the prophecy. On such a hypothesis it would have to be

explained why such imaginary stories are so few. Presumably with the Hebrew or Aramaic *Logia* there was transmitted a certain amount of oral information, so far as literary form is concerned not yet fixed, explaining the applicability of the testimonies, and giving the main outline of the incident illustrated. The view that our Lord was betrayed for thirty pieces of silver was surely something more than a supposition of the evangelist on the basis of the prophecy when he wrote his account of Judas' bargain with the chief priests (Matt. xxvi. 14–15), and must already have become part of the tradition, or one line of it. Similarly the belief that Joseph had thoughts of divorcing Mary on the ground of fornication must have become a well-established element in the evangelical tradition as known to him, or his circle, before our Lord's own words could be modified so as to allow divorce, not for adultery, but for fornication, prenuptial sin,[1] by the addition of the excepting clauses, 'Every one that putteth away his wife

[1] The Greek word means strictly fornication, but it is frequently used of unchastity in general. It cannot be limited to adultery, as is commonly supposed. The words of the gospel must mean either that divorce is allowable for fornication in the strict sense of prenuptial sin, or that it is allowable for fornication in the general sense, that is, for any form of impurity.

(saving for the cause of fornication) maketh her an adulteress,' 'Whosoever shall put away his wife (except for fornication) and shall marry another, committeth adultery' (Matt. v. 32, xix. 9; cf. Luke xvi. 18; Mark x. 11). We cannot imagine that the evangelist made so great an alteration entirely on his own responsibility. If such a tradition existed, it must have been part of that body of information, orally transmitted, by which alone the collection of prophecies was intelligible. If comparatively unimportant details of the story had their place in this line of tradition, it confirms the view that the doctrine of the virgin birth was already generally accepted.

The truth about the manner of the virgin's conception was made known to Joseph by an angel of the Lord who appeared to him 'in a dream' (i. 20). The phrase is found six times in the first gospel, but nowhere else in the New Testament. Five times it occurs in the narratives concerned with our Lord's birth and infancy, and once in the story of Pilate's wife. It is not uncommon in the Old Testament (Gen. xx. 3, 6; xxxi. 10, 11, 24; Num. xii. 6; 1 Kings iii. 5), and probably its use in Matthew is thence derived. What exactly the evangelist

meant by 'in a dream' is not very plain, but it is evidently to be distinguished from 'in an ecstasy' of Luke (Acts xi. 5, xxii. 17). Properly perhaps the phrase denotes a night vision, such as we hear of in connexion with St. Paul (Acts xvi. 9, xviii. 9, xxiii. 11, xxvii. 23), distinct from an ecstasy, yet having much in common. As used by the evangelist, however, the words, sometimes at any rate, seem little more than a formula, and are probably not to be taken literally. Three times a longer phrase is used (i. 20, ii. 13, 19; cf. Gen. xxxi. 11). That there was a communication from heaven is clearly intended by the evangelist, but in two cases at least (ii. 12, 22) it probably implies no more than that those concerned were moved by God to take a certain course of action, as perhaps in the case of Philip (Acts viii. 26), and according to the scribes of St. Paul (Acts xxiii. 9). On these two occasions no details of the message are given. On two others (ii. 13, 20) the words ascribed to the angel of the Lord seem to follow a formula derived apparently from the words of the angel of God to Hagar (Gen. xxi. 18). On the occasion when the message of the angel is given at length (i. 20–21) the phraseology, as we have noticed, is almost entirely Lucan.

Though the substance of the birth stories is apparently part of the evangelical tradition as current in the evangelist's circle, yet much of the detail and the literary form would appear to be his own. The incident of the dream of Pilate's wife, in which likewise the phrase occurs, has apparently the same literary origin, but, as this is quite independent of any Old Testament prophecy, we have further evidence that the narratives introducing the prophecies do not belong to the *Logia* source, but in their present form are the work of the evangelist; nor in this case can it possibly be argued that the story is an invention on the basis of an Old Testament text. If our argument is correct, the accounts of our Lord's birth and infancy given in the first gospel afford evidence of several distinct, if not entirely independent, traditions of the virgin birth—that recorded by St. Luke, that to which the collection of prophecies bears witness, and that which made the prophecies intelligible as illustrating the life of Jesus. The very existence of the stories in his gospel is evidence of the currency of the doctrine in the circle in which the evangelist moved, and he gives it the seal of his own authority.

CHAPTER III

THE FAMILY AT NAZARETH

THE stories of our Lord's birth and infancy given in the first gospel are written from the point of view of Joseph, whereas those of the third gospel are written from the point of view of Mary. Any source then from which the first evangelist could have gained his information must have been somehow connected with Joseph. Certainty may be impossible, but it will be useful to enquire into the possible origin of the tradition which forms the basis of his narrative, and so doing we shall find still further evidence for the truth of the virgin birth, or at any rate that it was the ordinary Christian belief in quite early days. According to Luke, in the synagogue of Nazareth the question of the people was, 'Is not this Joseph's son?' (iv. 22). According to Mark it was, 'Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon?

and are not his sisters here with us ?' (vi. 3). According to Matthew, it was, 'Is not this the carpenter's son ? is not his mother called Mary ? and his brethren, James, and Joseph, and Simon, and Judas ? And his sisters, are they not all with us ? ' (xiii. 55–56). According to John, a similar question was asked in the synagogue at Capernaum, ' Is not this Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose father and mother we know ? ' (vi. 42). Mark, who gives no story of the virgin birth, is the only evangelist who does not speak of Jesus as the son of Joseph. ' Son of Joseph ' would surely be much more natural than ' son of Mary ' on the lips of the people of Nazareth, or indeed of anyone who knew the family, for the mystery of His birth would hardly be public knowledge. Nor is it likely that the question was intended to give expression to a charge sometimes made against Him in later days, and perhaps alluded to in the statement of the Jews according to John, ' We were not born of fornication ' (viii. 41), that He was a bastard. The whole form of the question, with its reference to brothers and sisters, is against this, as indeed the whole context, and had it been intended it would surely not have survived in Mark's account only. The fact

that Luke and Matthew agree against Mark in describing Jesus as the son of Joseph not only supports our contention that Mark cannot be the primary record, but suggests that the change in Mark has been made on doctrinal grounds, and is intended to safeguard the truth about the virgin birth, to which otherwise the second gospel makes no reference. If so, Mark, as well as Luke and Matthew, is a witness to the virgin birth. Mark records a different tradition from that in Luke with regard to the visit to Nazareth, yet not improbably we may rely on his version of the question of the people of Nazareth as containing at any rate the substance of what was said, ' Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, and brother of James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? ' (vi. 3). Mark evidently intended to augment the narrative of Luke at this point, but even if his addition in this connexion were merely interpretative and corresponded to nothing actually said on the occasion, his words must surely be due to an authentic tradition with regard to the household at Nazareth. We seem thus to have good evidence that in popular estimation Jesus was regarded as the Son of Joseph and Mary, and Brother of

James, and Joses, and Judas, and Simon, and several sisters. Of one of the Lord's brethren we hear a great deal in the early history of the church, because of the prominent position he held among the Christians at Jerusalem (Acts xii. 17, xv. 13, xxi. 18; Gal. i. 19, ii. 9, 12), and in some sense, which we must try to determine, he was evidently regarded as an apostle (1 Cor. xv. 7; Gal. i. 19).

CHAPTER IV

THE APOSTLES OF CHRIST

Before we can come to any decision with regard to the exact nature and significance of the apostleship of James it will be necessary to consider the exact meaning of the word apostle. Its primary and etymological meaning is a messenger, or legate (John xiii. 16; 2 Cor. viii. 23; Phil. ii. 25; Heb. iii. 1). 'The very chiefest apostles,' as St. Paul calls them (2 Cor. xi. 5, xii. 11), were evidently the twelve who had been called (Mark i. 16–20; Luke v. 27), and appointed by Jesus (Luke vi. 13–16), and, having seen Him after He had risen, were able to be witnesses of His resurrection. St. Paul's call to be the 'apostle of the Gentiles' (Rom. xi. 13) was at His conversion (Acts ix. 6, 15; xxvi. 16–17), but his commission, or separation, as an apostle (Rom. i. 1) would appear to have been when with Barnabas he was sent forth by the

prophets from Antioch. For both him and Barnabas this was a solemn commissioning of those whom God had called (Acts xiii. 2), and the beginning of their apostolate, which later was ratified when James, Cephas, and John gave them the right hand of fellowship that they should go to the Gentiles (Gal. ii. 9). Before this commissioning at Antioch we read of no other apostles but the twelve, but immediately afterwards Paul and Barnabas are called apostles (Acts xiv. 4, 14). It is perhaps of such apostleship, charismatic in origin, that St. Paul speaks to the Corinthians (1 Cor. xii. 28–29; cf. Eph. ii. 20, iii. 5). St. Paul describes himself as 'called to be an apostle' (Rom. i. 1; 1 Cor. i. 1), but he does not claim for his commission more than that it was 'through the will of God' (1 Cor. i. 1; 2 Cor. i. 1; Eph. i. 1; Col. i. 1; 2 Tim. i. 1), 'according to the commandment of God our Saviour' (1 Tim. i. 1). Viewed in connexion with these other statements even the stronger claim in the epistle to the Galatians (i. 1), that he was an apostle 'not from men, neither through man, but through Jesus Christ, and God the Father,' cannot be interpreted as meaning more than his call did not have its origin in man, and that his commission and

separation for the work were not by the will and commandment of men. In a common apostleship with himself St. Paul seems to include Silvanus (1 Thes. ii. 6) and perhaps Apollos (1 Cor. iv. 9). Of the call of these we are told nothing, but St. Paul would probably have regarded Silvanus and Apollos as apostles 'from men,' or 'through man.' Of a commission of Silvanus we read in connexion with the council of Jerusalem (Acts xv. 25, 27, 33), but not of Apollos on any occasion. Andronicus and Junias, presumably Jews of Jerusalem or the neighbourhood, also seem to be accounted apostles (Rom. xvi. 7), but of neither their call nor commission are we told anything. We read also of false apostles, 'fashioning themselves into apostles of Christ' (2 Cor. xi. 13), 'which call themselves apostles, and they are not' (Rev. ii. 2). In his own case St. Paul lays emphasis on the fact that he had seen the risen Lord. He says, 'Am I not an apostle? have I not seen Jesus our Lord?' (1 Cor. ix. 1). 'Then he appeared to James; then to all the apostles; and last of all, as unto one born out of due time, he appeared to me also. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the

church of God' (1 Cor. xv. 7–9). But though to have seen Jesus after He had risen was necessary for one who like Matthias was to be joined with the eleven as a witness of the resurrection (Acts i. 21–22), and was therefore important for St. Paul who claimed equality with 'the very chiefest apostles,' it was hardly necessary for ordinary apostleship. Whatever their pretensions we have no evidence that the false apostles at either Corinth or Ephesus made this claim, and it is improbable. The proof of his apostleship St. Paul finds, not in the fact that he had seen the Lord, though he counts this a very high privilege, but in the manifest effects of his work (1 Cor. ix. 2; 2 Cor. xi. 5–6; xii. 12; Gal. ii. 8). We are not told that our Lord Himself commissioned other apostles beside the twelve, and certainly to have seen the risen Lord apart from a commission was not regarded as conferring apostleship, or there would have been no need to ordain Matthias, and there would have been no point in the name 'apostle,' so that when St. Paul tells us that Jesus was seen by 'all the apostles' (1 Cor. xv. 7) he can hardly be referring to anyone not of the twelve, or to those who at some later time had been commissioned as apostles. When

therefore we read 'Then he appeared to James; then to all the apostles' (1 Cor. xv. 7), the presumption is that James was an apostle in the same sense as the rest. Other references to James seem to support this conclusion. When the apostles and elders came together at Jerusalem to consider the question of the circumcision of the Gentiles, James appears to have been president, and to have made the decision, 'My judgement is' (Acts xv. 19). It is difficult to suppose that one who was an apostle in only a secondary sense could have so acted in the presence of Peter. Again, St. Paul says, 'I went up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas, and tarried with him fifteen days. But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother' (Gal. i. 18–19; cf. 17). The natural interpretation of this is not only that James was an apostle, but that his apostleship was of exactly the same type as Peter's. Once more St. Paul says, 'James and Cephas and John, they who were reputed to be pillars, gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship, that we should go unto the Gentiles, and they unto the circumcision' (Gal. ii. 9). It would be very extraordinary if the first name were that of the one who was only an apostle in a

secondary sense, two of 'the very chiefest apostles' (2 Cor. xi. 5, xii. 11) giving place, even though he held high position in the church at Jerusalem (Acts xii. 17, xxi. 18), particularly as it was not primarily a Jerusalem question. It is much more natural to suppose that he was one of the twelve. It might perhaps be possible to explain away any one of these four passages which seem to reckon James among the twelve, if it stood alone, but it is much more difficult to resist their combined testimony, and to attempt it is rather like special pleading.

Among the twelve according to each of the four lists there were two bearing the name of James, James who was 'the son of Zebedee,' though not so called in Luke's lists, and 'James the son of Alphæus,' so called in each of the lists (Luke vi. 15, Mark iii. 18, Matt. x. 3, Acts i. 13). The son of Zebedee was martyred by Herod at an early date (Acts xii. 2), so that if James the Lord's brother was one of the twelve he must be identified with James the son of Alphæus. But how could a son of Alphæus be regarded as a brother of Jesus?

CHAPTER V

THE BRETHREN OF THE LORD

ACCORDING to Luke at the sepulchre on Easter morning were 'Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary the mother of James' (xxiv. 10). James, who was the son of this Mary, was evidently a person presumed to be well known to Luke's readers, either as holding some prominent position in the church, or as having been already mentioned in the gospel. In the former case we at once think of James the Lord's brother, who at the period when Luke wrote would be the one person naturally understood by 'James.' In the latter the only possible person would be James the son of Alphæus —the same person, if our contention be correct—for James the son of Zebedee had been martyred, and James the father of Judas (vi. 16) is merely a name. According to Mark among the women standing by the cross of Jesus were 'Mary Magdalene, and

Mary the mother of James the little and of Joses ' (xv. 40), at the tomb on Good Friday evening ' Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of Joses ' (xv. 47), and on Easter morning ' Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James, and Salome ' (xvi. 1). The second Mary is clearly the same on each occasion, and must be the same person as ' Mary the mother of James ' of Luke (xxiv. 10). Mark's additions to the narrative are plainly explanatory and somewhat artificial, and would be pointless unless James and Joses were well-known characters, for the mother is to be distinguished by her sons. The only two brethren James and Joses otherwise known either in the gospel story, or indeed in the New Testament, are those called the brethren of Jesus. The natural interpretation of Mark's words is that he is referring to these, whom he had already mentioned, and not to two other brothers of the same names otherwise unknown, and that the three variants in the description of Mary are due to the influence of the tradition of Mark vi. 3 modifying the simpler description of Luke (xxiv. 10). Though not impossible the existence of two such pairs of brothers, not only bearing the same names, but with these names in exactly the same

sequence, would certainly be rather extraordinary, while if they really existed, that the evangelist should take no pains to distinguish them, though mentioning one or other of the second pair on several occasions seems wellnigh incredible. But if James and Joses the sons of Mary are to be identified with the Lord's brethren, according to our argument James would be James the son of Alphæus, the apostle, the second James of the apostolic band. Thus we see a special reason why this James should be called 'the little,' to distinguish him from the other apostle of the same name, James the son of Zebedee.

According to Luke then the second Mary would seem to be the mother of James the Lord's brother, or of James the son of Alphæus, if our argument is correct the same person, and according to Mark the mother of James and Joses the Lord's brethren. According to John, however, there were standing by the cross of Jesus 'his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene' (xix. 25). The most natural interpretation of these words in accordance with grammatical principles is that three persons only are intended, and that 'his mother's sister'

is 'Mary the wife of Clopas.' This would agree with the way in which the conjunction 'and' is used elsewhere in the gospel, as for example 'Martha, and her sister, and Lazarus' (xi. 5), and in the appendix 'Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples' (xxi. 2). It is true that in the list of the apostles given in Matthew the conjunction 'and' is used only in the middle of each pair of names, and likewise to some extent in the list given in Acts, but in these cases there is no ambiguity, each person being mentioned by his proper name, and not merely by a description as with the first pair of women in John, if four were intended. That in a list of four persons connected by 'and' in the middle of each pair two should be referred to by descriptions, and two by their names is in itself improbable. It is much more likely that only three women are mentioned. Probably also the wife of Clopas is 'the other Mary,' the mother of James. Otherwise of the many women at the cross of Jesus four of the six mentioned by name would be named Mary, Mary our Lord's mother, Mary the wife of Clopas, Mary Magdalene and Mary

the mother of James and Joses, not of course an impossibility, but certainly a very remarkable coincidence. That three should have been named Mary would be much less extraordinary, and all three being mentioned together by John there can be no possibility of reducing the number by any other process of identification. That there were only three women named Mary at the cross is also suggested by other considerations than those of probability. Clopas and Alphæus may not unreasonably be regarded as two forms of the same name, as in later days Clovis and Aloysius,[1] or at any rate as equivalent names like Jesus and Jason (Col. iv. 11; Rom. xvi. 21). The strongest and indeed practically the only really cogent argument against their identification is the fact that in the Syriac versions of the gospels the identity has not been recognised. It is true that in some cases the Peshito restores the original form of certain Aramaic names which in the Greek of the gospels had been grecised, as Zabdai for Zebedaios, but this is not always the case, for not only do we find Juchanon for Johannes but also Jochana

[1] Mill, *The Accounts of our Lord's Brethren*, p. 236; see Hastings, *Dictionary of the Bible*, i. 74–5; *Encyclopædia Biblica*, col. 849.

for Jochanan, where the influence of the Greek is still apparent.[1] Indeed, when we remember the lapse of time and the change of conditions between the writing of the gospels and the date of the Syriac versions, it would be very astonishing if the identity of the original of Clopas and Alphæus had been recognised, and, even if recognised, very improbable that the same form of the name would be used to translate both. We remember, too, how frequently when a document is translated from one language to another the equivalent proper name, however well known, is not used, but a transliteration of the name as it appears in the document being translated, as we note in the case of Old Testament names appearing in the New Testament in the authorised English version, where we find still the Greek form of the name as Elias, Esaias, Jeremias, Noe, Sodoma, etc., or in the case of Greek names Timotheus, Marcus, Lucas, etc., and in the Book of Common Prayer in the kalendar on May 1 Jacob for James, a literal translation from the Latin. In view of the wide liberty to be found in the New Testament in putting Aramaic names into a Greek form, some appearing in more

[1] Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 261.

than one, and indeed the general freedom in such matters in other languages, the objections raised to the identity of Clopas and Alphæus seem largely to vanish. There need be little hesitation therefore in seeing in Mary the wife of Clopas, who was the sister of the mother of Jesus, the wife of Alphæus who was the father of James, the second apostle of the name, whom we have identified with James the little and James the Lord's brother, the Lord's brethren being thus the sons of His mother's sister.

That Mary the wife of Clopas was the sister of the mother of Jesus in the sense that both were children of the same parents, or parent, seems very improbable, for two sisters by blood would surely not both be named Mary. By sister we should probably understand sister-in-law, the sister of Joseph, or the wife of her brother, who would thus be Clopas or Alphæus. If we accept the testimony of Hegesippus and combine it with that of the fourth gospel, it would appear to be the latter. Hegesippus clearly knew nothing of the family of our Lord at first hand, and some of his statements as, for example, his description of the martyrdom of St. James, drawn perhaps from the apocryphal 'Ascents of James,' are hardly

trustworthy, but his very precise description of the exact relationship of Simeon, the successor of James at Jerusalem, to Jesus, given in two places in almost identical words, would appear to be drawn from a more reliable source. We read according to the most natural translation, 'And after James the Just had been martyred, as was the Lord also for the same cause, again one sprung from His uncle, Simeon the son of Clopas, was made bishop, whom all put forward, being the second who was cousin of the Lord.'[1] In another place likewise Hegesippus describes him as 'one sprung from the uncle of the Lord, the aforementioned Simeon the son of Clopas'[2] so that the reference is clearly to the uncle of our Lord, not to the uncle of James. Eusebius in accordance with current opinion on the matter understands it as meaning that Clopas was the brother of Joseph,[3] and Lightfoot and Mayor, following apparently Eusebius's gloss, rather curiously translate 'paternal uncle,'[4] but the Greek word is used by quite good authorities, as

[1] Eusebius, *Hist. Eccl.*, iv. 22; P.G. xx. col. 380.

[2] *Ibid.*, iii. 32; P.G. xx. col. 284.

[3] *Ibid.*, ii. 1, iii. 11; P.G. xx. col. 133, 245–8.

[4] Lightfoot, *Galatians*, p. 268; Mayor, *St. James*, p. viii.

the orator Isæus [1] for mother's brother, as well as for father's brother. Hegesippus' statement may seem a circuitous way of saying that Simeon was the brother of James, but his whole point is to give not Simeon's relationship to James but to our Lord, that for the second time a son of the Lord's uncle Clopas was chosen. That the word we have translated 'again'—the usual translation—should be rendered 'next,' and that 'the second,' which would seem naturally to carry on the idea of 'again,' should be understood as a reference to the fact that Simeon was the second bishop in the succession at Jerusalem is surely a very forced rendering of the Greek, even though Eusebius, who regarded James as the son of Joseph, perhaps so understood it.[2] If Mary the wife of Clopas was the sister of Mary the mother of Jesus, as John says, it might well mean that 'the other Mary' was the wife of the Virgin's brother, but hardly that they were the wives of two brothers. We conclude then that in all probability Clopas was the brother of Mary, not of Joseph, and that Simeon our Lord's cousin

[1] *De Pyrrhi Hereditate*, 51; Mueller, *Oratorum Atticorum*, i. 256.

[2] *Hist. Eccl.*, iii. 22, 32; P.G. xx. col. 256, 281.

was the son of Clopas and 'Mary the mother of James the little and of Joses,' as also of Judas. On the death of Joseph, even though after the birth of Jesus the ancient rule that a childless widow should return to her father's house would no longer apply, it would be very natural that Mary should live with her brother Clopas or Alphæus. That cousins living together and brought up as members of the same household should in popular language be called brothers is very natural, and as the Greek word for cousin is comparatively rare, appearing only once in the New Testament, it is not easy to see what else they could be called. The word brethren has a wide range of meaning in the New Testament. It is used of those who are literally brethren, as children of the same parents, or parent, of fellow Jews, fellow Christians, and fellow men, of relatives and of those who are relatives only in a spiritual sense. St. Paul calls both Titus and Epaphroditus 'my brother' (2 Cor. ii. 13; Phil. ii. 25), because of the specially intimate relationship in which each stood to him. In the genealogy found in the first gospel we read, 'And Josiah begat Jechoniah and his brethren, at the time of the carrying away to Babylon' (i. 11). This is pre-

sumably based on a passage in the first book of the Chronicles. 'And the sons of Josiah; the first born Johanan, the second Jehoiakim, the third Zedekiah, the fourth Shallum. And the sons of Jehoiakim: Jeconiah his son, Zedekiah his son. And the sons of Jeconiah the captive. . . .' (iii. 15–17). Jeconiah is the grandson, not the son, of Josiah, and Zedekiah is not the brother of Jeconiah, but, like Johanan and Shallum, his uncle. Matthew thus speaks of uncle and nephew as brethren, following a not uncommon usage of the Old Testament (Gen. xiii. 8, cf. xi. 27; xxix. 15, cf. 10; Judg. ix. 3, cf. 1), where indeed brethren is used of relatives generally, or members of the same household (Gen. xxxi. 23, 32, 37), dwelling together or enjoying the same inheritance (Ps. cxxxiii. 1, Deut. xxv. 5–10, cf. Ruth iv. 1–10), and, what is of special importance for our argument, of cousins (Lev. x. 1-4; 2 Sam. xx. 9, cf. xvii. 25, 1 Chron. xxiii. 21–22). That Jesus dwelt together with those called His brethren, as a member of the same household, seems plain from the fourth gospel. 'He went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and there they abode not many days' (ii. 12). As the

Old Testament usage with regard to the word brethren is so wide, and this is found also at any rate in the first gospel, where uncle and nephew are called brethren, from the point of view of the meaning of the word there would seem to be no insuperable difficulty in using it to describe cousins living together, and in all probability brought up together, as members of the same family, which after the death of Joseph appears to have been the case with Jesus and James, Joses, Judas and Simon.

On each of the occasions on which it is recorded in the gospels that His brethren came to Jesus, both when they urged Him to go and manifest Himself in Judæa (John vii. 3), and when they said He was beside Himself, and wished to take hold on Him (Mark iii. 21, cf. 31), there seems to be a certain assumption of authority over Him, the explanation of which may perhaps be that they, or some of them, were older than Jesus, and had been accustomed to expect a certain amount of deference at home on that account. On the assumption that the brethren were actually the sons of Mary, or even as is sometimes supposed, the sons of Joseph by a former wife, as there were at least four of them

besides several sisters, it is inexplicable that Jesus on the cross should have entrusted His mother to the care of the beloved disciple, unless we regard the incident, being recorded only in the fourth gospel, as unhistorical, which would be contrary to the estimate we have formed of the value of this gospel in the course of our argument. If, however, the brethren and sisters were really His cousins, even though older in years, we have a quite adequate explanation, in view of the intimate friendship which existed between Jesus and the beloved disciple, even though they were her nephews and nieces.

It is of course easy to urge, as is frequently done, that words mean what they say, and that the brethren must have been the sons of Mary and Joseph. This hypothesis, however, only seems to create new difficulties, of which the incident at the cross is only one, even if we see nothing extraordinary in the existence of two pairs of brothers, James and Joses. The conclusion to which we have been led by an unbiased examination of the facts has the advantage of fitting them all into one consistent scheme.

It is also sometimes objected that the brethren of the Lord are always mentioned with His mother, and not with 'the other

Mary,' as we should expect if the latter were their mother. A little thought, however, suggests that it is by no means certain that she was absent on these occasions, even though, as she plays no distinctive part in the gospel story, her name is not mentioned. We read of her first in the accounts of the crucifixion and resurrection, but we are told that then she had already companied with Jesus some time, having with other women ministered to Him as He went from place to place in Galilee (Mark xv. 40–41, cf. Luke viii. 1–3), and followed Him thence to Jerusalem (Luke xxiii. 49, 55, xxiv. 6, 10; Mark xv. 40–41). When Jesus, His mother, His brethren, and His disciples went down to Capernaum (John ii. 12) it is very improbable that 'the other Mary' was not one of them, if we are right in her identity, though there was no need to mention it. Probably His sisters also were present. 'Mary the mother of James' was already with Jesus, it would seem according to Luke (viii. 1–3, xxiii. 55, xxiv. 10), when His mother and brethren came unto Him (viii. 19), and so she would obviously not be mentioned as with the brethren, though it is possible that His sisters may have come with them, as Mark speaks generally of

'his friends' (iii. 21), and Jesus mentions His sister as well as His brother and mother in His reply, 'Whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother' (Mark iii. 35). These words, if said in her presence, give special point to the injunction to this Mary with Mary Magdalene on Easter morning. 'Go tell my brethren that they depart into Galilee' (Matt. xxviii. 10). We may certainly conclude that 'the other Mary' was among those in the upper room after the ascension, when we are told the apostles continued steadfastly in prayer 'with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren' (Acts i. 14). The argument that the Lord's brethren are always mentioned with His mother, and not with the other Mary, seems thus entirely to fall to the ground, and our contention remains untouched.

CHAPTER VI

BRETHREN WHO WERE APOSTLES

On each occasion when they are mentioned the Lord's brethren seem to be distinguished from the apostles, yet this need not mean that none of them was an apostle, but only that as a body the brethren were distinct from the apostolic band. What, however, is regarded by some as an insuperable objection to even one of them, as James, being among the twelve is to be found in the statement of the fourth gospel, 'Even his brethren did not believe on him' (vii. 5), following immediately after our Lord's question, 'Did not I choose you the twelve?' (vi. 70), which shows that the apostles were already appointed. Not only are the brethen distinct from the twelve, who still believed in spite of Jesus' hard sayings (vi. 67–68), but the attitudes of the two groups to Him seem quite contradictory. John's testimony also seems supported by that of Mark. Immediately after appointing the twelve

apostles we are told Jesus went into a house, the multitude coming together again, and 'when his friends heard it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself' (Mark iii. 21). Among those called 'his friends' who thought Him mad we need not include His mother, though she came with them, but we must include His brethren, whoever else there may have been, sisters or others. Of this disbelief of His own family Jesus Himself seems to have spoken at Nazareth, 'A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house' (Mark vi. 4), and as this, according to Luke, the more authentic record, if our contention be correct, was at the very beginning of His ministry, their unbelief must have been of some standing. Is it necessary, however, to understand the words of either of the evangelists as meaning that not one of the four brethren mentioned, James, Joses, Judas, and Simon, believed on Him? An investigation of the methods of conveying information adopted by the writers of the gospels will be useful. John says, 'After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judæa; and there he tarried with them, and baptised' (iii. 22). This would

appear to be a plain enough statement that it was Jesus, not His disciples, Who baptised, and it is confirmed by the words recorded as spoken by the Baptist's disciples to their master, 'Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou hast borne witness, behold, the same baptiseth, and all men come to him' (iii. 26). The statement is absolute, with no qualification. A third time the evangelist says the same thing, and then, as an afterthought, it seems to have occurred to him that his thrice-made statement was not literally true, 'When therefore the Lord knew how that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus was making and baptising more disciples than John (although Jesus himself baptised not, but his disciples) he left Judæa' (iv. 1–3). It is clear that however absolute a statement of the evangelist may seem it is not necessarily to be taken as unconditionally true, so that when he says, 'Even his brethren did not believe on him' (vii. 5) it need not be understood as implying that not a single one of them believed, though it was true of the brethren as a body. So too Mark says, 'Now the chief priests and the whole council sought witness against Jesus to put him to death. . . . And they all condemned him to be worthy of death' (xiv. 55, 64).

If the evangelist had wished to imply that there were no exceptions he could hardly have used much more comprehensive language, and he repeats the statement, 'the chief priests with the elders and scribes, and the whole council, held a consultation, and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him up to Pilate' (xv. 1). Yet a little later he makes it quite plain that there must have been at least one who 'had not consented to their counsel and deed,' when he says, 'there came Joseph of Arimathæa, a councillor of honourable estate . . . and he boldly went in unto Pilate, and asked for the body of Jesus' (xv. 43). Clearly, however absolute and without qualification a statement of the gospel may be, we need not necessarily believe that there were no exceptions, so that when we are told that our Lord said, 'A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and among his own kin, and in his own house' (vi. 4), and that 'when his friends heard it, they went out to lay hold on him: for they said, He is beside himself' (iii. 21), even if by 'his friends' we are to understand 'his mother and his brethren' (iii. 31), it is clear that we have no evidence that there was no one of His brethren who believed in Him, though their

attitude as a body was that described by the evangelist. In 1 Cor. ix. 5 'the brethren of the Lord' can hardly be intended to include James. There need, therefore, be no difficulty in supposing that one of the Lord's brethren, James, was a believer at quite an early period of His ministry, though not necessarily, even if very probably, at the time of His visit to Nazareth, which according to Luke, whose narrative, we have decided, is as a rule more reliable than Mark's, took place before the appointment of the twelve. The supposition that James was an unbeliever until after the resurrection of Jesus, and that, as St. Paul says, 'he appeared to James' (1 Cor. xv. 7) in order to convert him, seems contrary to our Lord's principles of action, according to which He will not compel belief (Luke iv. 9–12), and, in particular, contrary to the principles of His manifestations after His resurrection, as St. Peter says, 'not to all the people, but unto witnesses that were chosen before of God, even to us' (Acts x. 41). Jesus might appear to those who did not believe in the resurrection, but not to those who would not believe in Himself. James, therefore, must have been a believer before the resurrection, which is confirmed by the so-called gospel of the Hebrews, whatever

its value. There seems, then, to be no sufficient argument against the idea that James was not only an apostle but one of the twelve. After asserting his apostleship to the Corinthians St. Paul says, 'Have we no right to eat and to drink? Have we no right to lead about a wife that is a believer, even as the rest of the apostles, and the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have we not a right to forbear working?' (1 Cor. ix. 4–6). The word apostles here certainly includes others besides the twelve, as Paul and Barnabas. Cephas is the first of the twelve. The brethren occupy an intermediate position, which suggests that all may have been apostles in some sense, and, though James appears to be excluded on this occasion, that one or more may have belonged to the twelve. It is sometimes argued that 'Judas of James' in Luke's lists of the twelve apostles (vi. 16, Acts i. 13) is Judas the Lord's brother (Mark vi. 3); but probably the meaning is that Judas was the son, not the brother of James, literary usage allowing us to supply 'son,' but apparently not 'brother.' We notice, too, that in the epistle ascribed to Jude his chief claim to distinction is said to be not that he was an apostle, but that he was 'brother of James'

(Jude 1). That Simon the Cananaean (Mark iii. 18) is to be identified with Simon the Lord's brother (Mark vi. 3) is even more unlikely. Apart from the appearance of the same three names, James, Simon and Judas, in the two lists of the Lord's brethren and of the apostles, there seems to be no argument in its favour, the name Simon being particularly common. Hegesippus in the extracts quoted[1] gives no hint that the Simeon, cousin of the Lord, who succeeded James at Jerusalem was an apostle. There is, however, something to be said in favour of Matthew the apostle being a cousin of the Lord, and so in a sense His brother. 'Matthew the publican,' according to the first gospel (ix. 9, x. 3), is certainly the person described by Luke as 'a publican, named Levi' (v. 27), and by Mark as 'Levi the son of Alphæus' (ii. 14). Alphæus is by no means a common name, and is used in the New Testament only of the father of James, and the father of Matthew. Mark alone describes Levi as the son of Alphæus, and unless he is referring to the Alphæus whom we find mentioned in each of the four lists of the apostles his addition is distinctly misleading. No other Levi appearing in the gospels, save in Luke's genealogy, where the

[1] See p. 160.

name is spelled differently, 'of Alphæus' cannot be explained, like 'of James' in connexion with Judas, as necessary for identification. There seems to be no sufficient reason to suppose that, unless otherwise stated, whenever a name appears in a gospel, or even in the New Testament, it must refer to a different person each time; it is more natural, very frequently, to suppose that it refers to one mentioned elsewhere. The probability, therefore, would appear to be that Levi or Matthew was another of the cousins of Jesus, and brother of James, Joses, Judas and Simon, the son of Alphæus and Mary. He is not mentioned by the people of Nazareth as a brother of the Lord, because he no longer lived there, but was established in business in Capernaum. That they should say 'Are not his sisters here with us?' (Mark vi. 3), 'all' of them, according to the first gospel (xiii. 56), may perhaps be taken to suggest that this was not the case with all the brethren, but that one or more dwelt elsewhere. On no other occasion in the gospels are any of the Lord's brethren alluded to as such by name, and even in the epistles James alone is so described, so that we need not be surprised that Matthew is nowhere called 'the Lord's brother.' That 'Mary the mother of James'

(Luke xxiv. 10; Mark xvi. 1) is never called the mother of Levi, though she is called 'the mother of James the little and of Joses' (Mark xv. 40), and 'the mother of Joses' (Mark xv. 47), may perhaps be explained by the fact that the different descriptions in Mark appear to be merely interpretative variants of Luke's 'mother of James' on the basis of the tradition with regard to the household at Nazareth, to which James belonged, incorporated in the account of Jesus' visit to His own country (vi. 3), while it is of course possible that though Levi was the son of Alphæus he was not the son of Mary, in which case, as he would necessarily be older than the rest, we should have an explanation, not only of his absence from Nazareth but of the fact that he had been able to attain to a position of such importance in Capernaum while his brothers were still at home. The short stay of our Lord with His relatives and disciples at Capernaum, recorded in the fourth gospel at the beginning of His ministry, is more reasonably explained, like His presence at the marriage feast at Cana, which immediately precedes it, as a visit primarily for family and social purposes, and not for the work of His ministry:

'After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and there they abode not many days' (ii. 12). Apparently Jesus was as well known at Capernaum as at Nazareth (John vi. 42, cf. Luke iv. 22). If Matthew were a member of the same family, we have an explanation both natural and sufficient. That he made Jesus a great feast in his house (Luke v. 29) after his call may also be taken as evidence of more than ordinary familiarity, nothing of the sort being mentioned after the call of Peter and Andrew, or of James and John, though Jesus was already on intimate terms with those of Simon's house according to Luke (iv. 38, v. 10–11), and Zebedee at any rate certainly seems to have been in a financial position such that the cost would have presented no difficulty (Mark i. 20). All these considerations, however, must necessarily be to some extent speculative: yet, whatever their value, the fact remains that there seems to be no conclusive argument against the hypothesis that Matthew, or Levi the son of Alphæus, was a cousin of our Lord, while as we have seen there is much to commend it, and it gives fresh significance to several incidents in the gospel narrative.

CHAPTER VII

THE SOURCES OF THE BIRTH NARRATIVES

EACH of the synoptic gospels appears to be based on traditions derived ultimately from Peter and John,[1] and where the narrative is found in all three gospels the probability is that the source is Petrine. The call of only five of the apostles is recorded. Peter, Andrew, James and John were partners in a fishing business, and were called practically together (Luke v. 10–11, Mark i. 16–20), so that we can understand Peter's interest in the matter, and the place their call occupies in a tradition derived from him. The suggestion is that he had likewise a special interest in Matthew, arising perhaps from their common residence in Capernaum, and their necessary dealings with one another in connexion with the fisheries. The first gospel is by far the most Petrine, much more so even than Mark, and it is in this that

[1] See 'The Origin of the Gospels,' *C.Q.R.*, July, 1922.

we find the collection of prophecies translated from the Aramaic or Hebrew which we have seen reason to identify with the *Logia*, compiled in Hebrew by Matthew, according to Papias.[1] If we think of Matthew as a cousin of Jesus no one would be more likely to have information about the birth of Jesus than he, except His mother Mary whose account is recorded by Luke. The probability, then, would seem to be that the evangelist derived his knowledge of the birth narratives, as of the prophecies, from Matthew through Peter, who appears to have had a special connexion of some sort with the publican and interest in him.

We cannot, however, ascribe all the details of the birth stories of the first gospel to Matthew, even if they are Petrine in some degree. Joseph, according to each of the four evangelists, would appear to have died before our Lord's ministry began, and so before He came to realise at His baptism the fullness of the work He came to do. It is unlikely that Matthew—or any of the sons of Alphæus—was familiar with truths about His office which were hidden from Jesus Himself. Though His brethren may have learned from Joseph the main features

[1] See p. 135.

of the wonderful story of His birth, they can scarcely have so learned all the details recorded in the first gospel, that, for example, the angel said to him, 'Thou shalt call his name Jesus; for it is he that shall save his people from their sins' (i. 21), for this presupposes the revelation made to Jesus in the vision at His baptism, that He was the Servant of Jehovah, Who should bear the sin of many (Is. liii. 12). Some of the phraseology of the account of the announcement to Joseph of the birth of Jesus we have seen is Lucan, some we now see must be interpretative, added perhaps unconsciously to the nucleus of the story in the light of later knowledge and experience. Yet the mystery of His birth, and the main outline of the wonderful events which accompanied it, must have been a treasured secret of the family. We note indeed that even when we are told that 'his brethren did not believe on him' (John vii. 5), they yet expected great things of Him, and saw in His works a sign of possible greatness: 'If thou doest these things, manifest thyself to the world' (vii. 4); and even if as yet they did not believe on Him, they do not appear to have been unacquainted with His Messianic claims, or to have regarded them as entirely incredible. Their unbelief was

not inconsistent with some knowledge of His mysterious birth and its wonderful accompaniments, rousing in them greater expectations than they could at this period bring themselves to believe. The general outline of the story of His birth, as told by man to man, by Joseph to his brother-in-law if not to his nephews, might well be known by the Lord's cousins and brethren, and by them be told to Peter and perhaps others, though all the details, as we have seen, can hardly be regarded as equally authentic, being traceable to some extent not to Matthew but to Luke and his earlier record, and in part to interpretative additions such as are natural in the course of oral instruction. We thus arrive at an explanation of the birth stories of the first gospel which, though of necessity hypothetical and incapable of proof, yet does appear to fit all the facts.

Though in some of the details the account given in the first gospel may not be in the strict sense historical, yet our criticism, whatever its value, has left absolutely untouched the basal fact of the virgin birth. From a literary point of view indeed the evidence is much stronger than before, for we see that the evangelist unites in his record the testimony of various authorities

and various traditions. The doctrine comes to us then with the authority of Luke and his source, probably the apostle St. John, and ultimately the virgin mother, with the authority of Mark, who, though he conceived it no part of his duty to narrate it, yet altered his source, calling Jesus 'the son of Mary,' so as not even to seem to deny it, and with the authority of Matthew and the different lines of tradition combined in the first gospel, that presumably derived from our Lord's relatives according to the flesh, His brethren and ultimately Joseph, through Matthew the apostle and probably also Peter, and that which suggested the prophecy of Isaiah vii. 14 as illustrating the virgin birth, which, if it did not originate with Matthew, was at any rate recorded by him apparently in his Hebrew *Logia*, as well as the tradition of Luke which the first evangelist, we have decided, knew and utilised for his own work. No literary criticism can provide a proof of the supernatural. If proof is conceivable it must be sought in another sphere. Criticism can do no more than sift the evidence, and show to what extent particular elements may be regarded as reliable from the point of view not of science but of literature.

The very possibility of the virgin birth is frequently denied, but is it so unreasonable as is sometimes supposed? Parthenogenesis is common among certain of the lower orders of creation, and may be induced even by non-natural stimuli. In the higher orders also, among animals and human beings, there occur phenomena of a similar type which are explained pathologically as examples of virgin conception, though never apparently resulting in a virgin birth. If levitation may occur when a person is in an ecstatic condition, and stigmatisation may follow a vision of our Lord vouchsafed to one yearning ardently for union with Him in His passion—and of each there seems to be ample evidence—it is not easy to see why other occurrences, no more contrary to the ordinary working of nature, should be regarded as impossible. As the result of an ecstasy Zacharias became dumb and St. Paul blind, the physical consequence in each case being suited to the occasion and consonant with the object of the vision. There would seem to be nothing unreasonable, therefore, in supposing that with the right dispositions the stimulus of an ecstasy might result, not only in the reception of power to be a father in one like Zacharias devoutly

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longing and praying for a son, but also in the reception of power to be a mother, though still a virgin, in one yearning like all pious Jewish maidens that through her might be born the expected Messiah. It may be that the virgin birth ought to be regarded as an event not so much miraculous as unique. Only to a highly favoured few is an ecstasy ever vouchsafed, and to what other maiden in an ecstasy could it have been revealed at any time that she should receive power to become the mother of the Son of God ? (Luke i. 35).

In these pages, however, we are concerned not so much with scientific speculation as with the sifting of evidence, however it may be explained. After all, if we believe in the stupendous fact of the Incarnation, belief in the virgin birth is a very small thing. To the childlike mind of the simple Christian the latter has always seemed, if not an absolutely necessary, at any rate the most fitting method of compassing the former. If this essay is successful in making the faith of the Church in this particular in any degree easier to believe, it will not have been in vain.

Per Mysterium sanctae Incarnationis tuae,
Per Nativitatem tuam,
Libera nos, Domine.

Printed in England by Spottiswoode, Ballantyne & Co. Ltd., Colchester, London & Eton

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